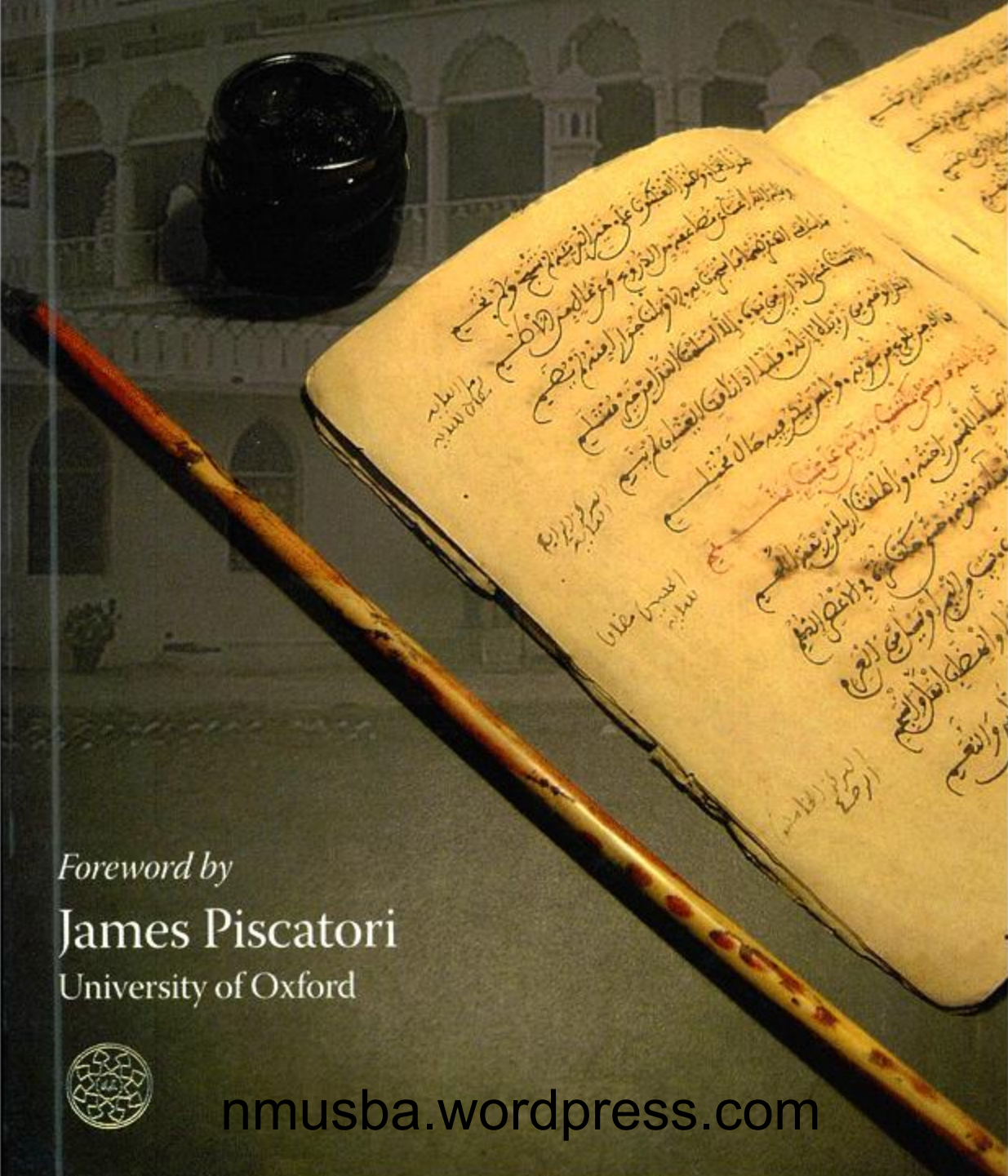


Madrasah Life

A STUDENT'S DAY AT NADWAT AL-ULAMA

Mohammad Akram Nadwi



Foreword by

James Piscatori

University of Oxford



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UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Foreword



James Piscatori

THE MADRASAH HAS attracted considerable attention, even notoriety, since the startling events of September 11th. It is widely believed, particularly among Western policymakers, that these schools and colleges are the training ground for radical activities and directly sustain terrorist networks such as al-Qa'ida. No-one a decade ago would have anticipated that a traditional educational institution would occupy a central place in discussions between the presidents of the United States and Pakistan. But several months after the attacks on New York and Washington, in February 2002, George W. Bush and Pervez Musharraf agreed, in Bush's words, that 'the modern world requires an education system that trains children in basic sciences and reading and math and the history of Pakistan'. Musharraf conceded that, although madrasahs provide an important social welfare function, lodging and training the poor in particular, their 'weakness' lies in exclusive 'religious' training. He assured the president that fundamental reforms to the curriculum, emphasizing science, mathematics, and English, would allow the 600,000 to 800,000 madrasah students in Pakistan 'to be brought into the mainstream of life'.¹ Similar arguments have been made of madrasahs in the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia, and governments, under pressure from Western donors and facing organised internal opposition, have pledged to reform them.

¹ Transcript, 'Bush Hosts Pakistani President Musharraf at White House', 13 February 2002, Department of State Washington File, <http://www.usinfo.org/wf-archive/2002/020213/epf301.htm> (accessed 30 November 2006).

There is no doubt that the madrasah suffers today from a serious public relations problem. Little understood, it has become emblematic of extremism; caricatured in this way, it has further complicated our understandings of Muslim beliefs and practices. Part of the difficulty lies in the variable usage of the term. Most commentators use the word 'madrasah' to refer to primary and secondary education, whereas in some societies such as India, which this book covers, it applies to tertiary and post-graduate education as well. This work details a typical day in the life of a *faḍīlah*, or Master's level, student who embarks on a two-year programme after the four-year undergraduate, or 'ālimiyyah, programme.

Despite the important difference between schooling and university-level education, 'madrasah', as a synonym for religious education, is commonly juxtaposed with 'modern' education; religious subjects are contrasted with the 'mainstream'. Having evolved over the centuries and shaped by general principles and local needs, however, this institution – or, more precisely, related institutions – are both less and more than their image suggests; the madrasah is less rigid and less directly political than many fear, and it is more capable of combining religious studies with an inquiring approach than is often assumed. It is the singular achievement of Mohammad Akram Nadwi that he provides the first full exposition of the daily life of a madrasah. In so doing, he provides the raw material that allows us to see the institution as rounded and responsive – a complex, intellectually challenging and spiritually charged learning environment that binds teachers and students together in an enterprise that sustains and renews Muslim society.

Prior to *Madrasah Life*, we have relied on the descriptions of Muslim historians, the glimpses of travellers, the account of orientalist such as Snouck Hurgronje and a small number of anthropological studies to examine the madrasah's place in Muslim

2 For example, Dale F. Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco: The Education of a Twentieth-Century Notable* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); and Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960).

3 Richard T. Mortel, 'Madrasas in Mecca During the Medieval Period: A Descriptive Study Based on Literary Sources', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 60, no. 2 (1997), pp. 236-252.

life³. Fifteenth century historians like Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Fāsī and Najm al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn Fahd tell us that there were 23 madrasahs in Makkah prior to Ottoman times³, for example, and Quṭb al-Dīn’s history of Makkah documents the flourishing of madrasah education in the holy city under the patronage of Mamlūk and early Ottoman rulers.⁴ Hurgronje gives us a greater sense of what occurred within the Makkan educational complex, but distinguishes the higher studies at the Grand Mosque (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām) from earlier training. He made a sad note of the fact that the ‘madrasah’ had, by the late nineteenth century, declined to the point where once-grand buildings were treated as abandoned, and the word itself had come to denote simply a house near the mosque. Yet there is the hint in Hurgronje’s writing that perhaps all is not lost: ‘Only a few of the poorer rooms are still occupied by poor teachers and students, and here and there the rich occupier of the best rooms will arrange for a lecture, out of respect for the founder, to be given weekly in the hall (*dihltz*) or a room of the building.’⁵ One suspects that more was going on than even this perceptive observer discerned.

Indeed, the self-consciousness of ‘tradition’ and commitment that unfolds in this volume hints at something more enduring and fundamental than buildings or curricula. Dr Nadwi’s account is, in this sense, the best of participant observation: it reports on the structure of higher madrasah education, but also imparts the ‘ambience’ – the intellectual excitement, the spiritual enthusiasm. Teachers unforgettably appear in fond pen portraits, sartorially challenged at times or impatient, but indisputably learned and generous with their knowledge. It is also reassuring to find that, however motivated they are, students remain students – reluctant to get up in the morning, argumentative, bored with grammar, teasing one another over sporting rivalries, concerned that standards are slipping yet skimming assigned readings. The milieu is more cultured, though, than the typical Western school or college, with

4 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nahrawālī al-Makkī al-Ḥanafī, *al-Ṭīlām bi-a’lām baytillāh al-ḥarām* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1857).

5 C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the Nineteenth Century*, translated by J.H. Monahan (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), p. 172.

poetry and literary criticism a common diversion. More importantly, the calls to prayer punctuate the daily life of the madrasah students, as has been done for centuries and across diverse societies. They begin a long day with the dawn prayer, attend classes from 8.00 a.m., perform the mid-day prayer, rest in the afternoon after lunch, pray the *‘aṣr* prayer in the late afternoon and then engage in a combination of entertainment and study, attend a seminar after sunset and the *maghrib* prayer, say the evening prayer, and retire perhaps by 1.00 a.m., only to rise again several hours later for the dawn prayer. In describing this ritually marked routine, Dr Nadwi reminds us that the transmission and acquisition of knowledge form a continuum with worship and the search for piety.⁶

While the madrasah that emerges here is thus connected to the centuries-old Islamic educational experience, it has a cultural and intellectual specificity as well. *Dār al-‘Ulūm Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’*, based in Lucknow, is the product of a particular revivalist strand that dates back to the late nineteenth century and, in its self-presentation, was broadly inspired by the eighteenth century Indian thinker, Shāh Waliullāh (1703-1762 CE). Its proponents, including the modernist Muḥammad ‘Alī Mungerī (1846-1944) and the pan-Islamist Shiblī Nu‘mānī (1857-1914), espoused keeping pace with modern conditions while adhering to the basic canonical sources of Islam and promoting the tolerance associated with the principles of the spiritual path. While prescribing its own curriculum, it moved beyond the *Dars-i Niẓāmī* syllabus common in India from the early eighteenth century and introduced diverse legal views and modern sciences and languages. As this suggests, it represents a *mélange* of perspectives and defies easy categorisation. Some would thus refer to the madrasah as traditional, others as modernist, still others as Sufi-inspired. In Nadwah’s worldview, its vitality derives from the blending of these perspectives into a seamless whole. In the words of its twentieth century patron, cited in the preface to this volume, Mawlānā Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwī (1914-1999), the madrasah, rightly conceived, takes its place as ‘the powerhouse of the Islamic world’.

⁶ See also Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the most concrete impression that emerges from this diary is the level of intellectual curiosity and disputation that characterises the daily life of a madrasah student. This cuts to the core of one of the principal criticisms of the institution. While many object to the nature of the curriculum, objection is also made, at times vociferously, to the pedagogy. It is often assumed that rote and tightly-defined education leads to an inflexibility of mind that reinforces authoritarianism or enhances the ability of radical groups to recruit adherents. In the Southeast Asian experience, focus is often placed on *kitāb kuning*, the 'yellow books' that purportedly contain, and limit, knowledge.⁷ To many observers, they imply a closed and classical educational system, which is to be learned but not questioned. While this volume deals with a more advanced madrasah education than is normally covered by this criticism, it nevertheless shows, by way of contrast, that students who are being trained in the religious sciences – Qur'ān, Prophetic sayings (*hadīth*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the spiritual path (*taṣawwuf*), and Arabic – display well-honed skills of critical judgement. The parameters are different from those of a paradigmatic 'liberal education' but, leaving aside what this means in practice, it is clear that working within a structured framework allows for focused rules of intellectual engagement. As Dr Nadwi shows, students – at least post-graduate ones – are perfectly capable of questioning the competence of scholars in one field while admiring their contributions in another, or suggesting that their train of thought leads to a variant conclusion without disputing the validity of the basic inquiry.

With its curriculum conventionally focused yet liberally taught, the madrasah is naturally open to diverse influences. Some teachers are versed in Western educational methods and are expert in journalism or modern Arabic literature, for instance, and a number of the students comfortably invoke Freud or Sartre in support of an interpretative point. Some students are influenced by the Tablighī

7 Martin van Bruinessen, 'Pesantren and Kitab Kuning: Maintenance and Continuation of a Tradition of Religious Learning', in Wolfgang Marschall (ed.), *Texts from the Islands: Oral and Written Traditions of Indonesia and the Malay World* (Berne: University of Berne Press, 1994), p. 121.

Jamā'at, and others received training at Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd University in Riyadh. But none *necessarily* derives greater authority from such associations. One student is pointedly told that citing Tablighī practice is not sufficient proof of an argument, nor is Ibn Taymiyyah, a Saudi favourite, automatically correct in his views. Each advanced student must embark upon a detailed research project and write a dissertation, thereby developing the skills of argumentation and lucid writing. But, in the end, success depends, as it has for centuries throughout the Muslim world, on a detailed knowledge of the classical sources of Islam.

Mohammad Akram Nadwi offers an acutely observed and charming portrait of the student intent on acquiring this knowledge. From an insider's vantage point, he takes us into a world most of us do not normally enter and helps us to appreciate the rich intellectual traditions and the lively debates within Islamic educational institutions. The contribution of *Madrasah Life* is both unassuming and conclusive; it disturbs the complacent thought that madrasahs are inevitably anti-modern and marginal.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*All praise and thanks are due to God, the Lord of all
creatures and domains. May peace and blessings be on the
best of His creation, the Prophet Muḥammad, and upon
his family and his Companions.*

Introduction



WHAT IS A MADRASAH? What part does it play in the life and development of individuals and society? How are days and nights spent at a madrasah? These and similar questions are often raised both by those familiar with the institution and those ignorant of it. Most writers on the subject betray a superficial, second-hand knowledge of madrasahs, their curricula and their methods of teaching; they make reckless, sweeping statements with little regard for basic norms of honesty and fairness, and without the labour of independent inquiry into what is a system of education that has endured, and evolved, over many centuries.

آنانکه وصف حسن تو تقریر می کنند
خواب نادیده راهمه تعبیر می کنند

Those offering to report your beauty
Are only interpreting a dream they never had

When a community has lost its grip on power, and its former prestige and glory slip away from it, the memory of its contribution to culture and civilisation weakens until that contribution is questioned, then doubted, then denied; even those of its virtues that still survive are presented in a negative light, made the object of suspicion or ridicule. Distrust of madrasahs first came to the fore when the British Empire, having entrenched itself in the subcontinent, introduced its own educational system. But even at that time, there were some objective, fair-minded individuals who had enjoyed firsthand access to the madrasah system, and who therefore recognised its strengths and efficacy. Major-General Sir W. H. Sleeman, after visiting

madrasahs in India in the early nineteenth century, recorded these impressions about madrasah graduates:

“Perhaps there are few communities in the world among whom education is more generally diffused than among Muhammedans in India. He who holds an office worth twenty rupees a month commonly gives his son an education equal to that of a prime minister. They learn, through the medium of the Arabic and Persian languages, what young men in our colleges learn through those of the Greek and Latin – that is, grammar, rhetoric, and logic. After his seven years of study, the young Muhammedan binds his turban upon a head almost as well filled with the things which appertain to these branches of knowledge as the young man raw from Oxford; he will talk as fluently about Socrates, and Aristotle, Plato, and Hippocrates, Galen and Avicenna and, what is much to his advantage in India, the languages in which he has learnt what he knows are those which he most requires through life.”⁸

That praise is for madrasah education insofar as it is like “Oxford”, but that relates to only half the syllabus; the major components are Arabic language and literature, Qur’ānic Studies, Hadith⁹, Fiqh¹⁰ and Tasawwuf.¹¹ This holds as true today as in the early 19th century. The standard for these subjects is of the same level as for logical and philosophical disciplines, if not higher. A leading Islamic thinker, Mawlānā Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwī,¹² who had spent his whole life at a madrasah and critically examined both the Western and Oriental educational systems, explained the scope and function of the madrasah in this way:

8 *Rambles and Recollections of An Indian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915), pp. 523-4.

9 Sayings of the Prophet, peace be upon him.

10 Understanding and development of Islamic law, jurisprudence.

11 Islamic mysticism.

12 Mawlānā Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwī (1914-1999), one of the most prolific and original thinkers of our time, author of over fifty books available in several languages, and a scholar of rare distinction. Among his widely read works are: *Islam and the World*, *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*, and *Islamic Concept of Prophethood*. He made many journeys to Western countries in order to assess the situation there and addressed many speeches to both lay and academic audiences. Some of these speeches have been published in such works as *Speaking Plainly to the West*, and *Western Civilization: Islam and Muslims*.

Introduction

“It is the institution for man’s upbringing and for channelling his talents. It is a place where those who call to Islam and defend the faith are prepared. A madrasah may be likened, in a manner of speaking, to the powerhouse of the Islamic world, which provides energy not only to Muslims but also to all of mankind. It is a centre where the heart and soul are purified, and the mind and intellect nourished. A madrasah is a place wherein a world-view is cultivated, and humanity is thereby sustained. It leads, and is not led. A madrasah is not specific to any particular nation, civilisation, culture, era, language or literature. It thus transcends decadence and decline. For it is nourished and sustained directly by the Prophet Muḥammad’s message, which is universal and timeless. It is inextricably linked with the life force of humanity and with life in its vibrancy and variety. It is independent of the debate about ‘classical’ and ‘modern’. For it is characterised by the eternal and life-giving message of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him.”¹³

The present work is a modest attempt to bring into relief the ethos of one particular madrasah¹⁴ and the range of its activities. It does

13 Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwī, *Pā jā surāgh-i zindagī*, (Urdu). p. 9.

14 This being Dār al-‘Ulūm Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’ in Lucknow, India. Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’ was established in 1893 (1311 AH) as a revivalist movement by some sincere, far-sighted scholars of Islam, who were firm in their belief in the doctrines of Islam and who enjoyed a revered social standing on account of their piety and learning. They came out of the school of Shaykh al-Islām Shāh Waliullāh Dihlawī and his disciples. The guides and leaders of this earnest group of men were Mawlānā Muḥammad ‘Alī Mungerī, Mawlānā Shibli Nu‘māni and Mawlānā ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥasanī.

Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’ aimed: (a) to introduce appropriate changes into the syllabuses of Islamic training in order to bring them into line with the changed conditions of the modern age, and to integrate religious education, as far as possible, with the cultural progress of the community; (b) to examine the principles and injunctions of the Shari‘ah in order to sustain their conformity with the fundamental guidance of the Qur’an and *sunnah* while addressing an ever-growing number of modern questions and problems; (c) to establish a library in northern India to serve as a centre for study and research in Islamic sciences; (d) to propagate the Islamic faith and ideals through suitable literature and to make arrangements for its publication; (e) to train and educate teachers who have a sufficiently deep knowledge of the Qur’an and Sunnah to affect the moral environment and improve the prevailing social conditions.

Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’ held its annual sessions in different cities. But it was soon felt that unless some practical steps were taken to translate these ideas into action, the movement would not be understood and appreciated. Accordingly, the first step

not seek to enumerate the disciplines taught there. Nor does it try to describe all the academic, literary, educational, self-developmental, writing and *da'wah* activities pursued there, though its students and faculty are continuously engaged in these. In recounting a day at my alma mater in the Indian subcontinent my aim has been to recreate the ethos of a madrasah that enriched life for numerous students like myself, and imbued us with commitment to faith, love for the Divine Book and admiration for the Prophet's words. It enabled us to develop a love of knowledge, and a depth and breadth of thought and literary taste. In sum, it taught us how to live well, by providing us with the means and tools to acquire beneficial knowledge, to exercise conscience and reason, to articulate and practise moral precepts.

In early March 1983, I was a student in the second year of my *fadīlah* course (the equivalent of an MA), with Ḥadīth as my specialisation. The rector of Nadwah at that time was Mawlānā Muḥibullāh Lārī, a former student at Nadwah and a graduate of Aligarh Muslim University. He was a strict disciplinarian and did not allow any interference in his administrative work. He was averse to irregularities of any kind and refused undue pressure from or on behalf of anyone. He had a special love of prayer, his own prayers being characterised by the utmost devotion, spirituality and calmness. As he would go on his rounds after *fajr* (dawn) prayer, everyone would come to a sort of moral attention.

I was allotted room no. 6 on the third storey of the Aṭhar hostel, where the warden was the late Mawlānā Shāhbāz Iṣlāhī. This

was taken in 1898 (1316 AH) with the establishment at Lucknow of a Dār al-'Ulūm (literally, 'the house of the sciences'). This institution quietly earned itself a proud reputation, in India and abroad, as a modern seat of learning the Arabic language and Islamic sciences.

Dār al-'Ulūm concentrates particularly on the Qur'an, traditions of the Prophet, Islamic law, and Arabic as a classical and living language. The importance and effectiveness of the endeavours of the Nadwat al-'Ulamā' have been acknowledged throughout India and in the entire world.

In brief, Dār al-'Ulūm has tried to produce intellectually broad-minded scholars able to connect with the wider world, and therefore to represent and extend Islam, to expound the eternal nature of the Divine Message and the distinguishing features of the Sharī'ah and its way in such language as might appeal to the modern mind, and so help to bring about a confluence between the traditional and the modern.

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man was an excellent, versatile scholar – his company benefitted everyone. It is hard to measure and record our debt to him. He was adept in both traditional and rational disciplines, with the greatest expertise in *tafsīr* and Qur'ānic sciences. He was blessed also with the traits of a true Sufi who practises self-abnegation and self-effacement.

All of our teachers were fully committed to their duty and exceptionally competent, with extraordinary command over their respective fields of specialisation. Organised, formal teaching was naturally of great importance at Nadwah. However, it was the interaction between teacher and student, and the scholarly circles and literary gatherings that provided so much of one's spiritual and intellectual nourishment. Those who have a superficial, materialistic outlook on life cannot appreciate the benefits of such gatherings. However, those who spent some time at Nadwah understood well the value of this ambience. The two following incidents may help readers grasp the ethos prevailing at Nadwah.

The Rector, Mawlānā Muḥibullāh Lārī, once expressed the desire to be allowed to stay at Nadwah for the rest of his life after his superannuation. I asked him why he preferred to stay there, rather than with his family and children. He said that he would not find the academic, religious and spiritual atmosphere that he found in Nadwah anywhere else, nor could he join so large a congregation for prayer. The case of our Arabic teacher, Mawlānā Muḥammad Wāḍiḥ Rashīd Nadwī, is similar. He had been at the Arabic Department of All India Radio. When some faculty members of Nadwah were on a long leave, he was invited to teach on a temporary basis. After joining Nadwah he felt so much at home there that he was not willing to go back to All India Radio and Delhi. He used to receive a much higher salary in Delhi yet had become deeply attached to Nadwah. As his departure approached, he felt more anxious. According to his own account, when alone, he used to cry and pray fervently for his stay at Nadwah to continue. God granted his supplication and before his departure, Nadwah administration invited him to take up a permanent position.

Mawlānā Muḥammad Wāḍiḥ Rashīd Nadwī is a competent

scholar, dear to everyone, and the very model of a classical 'ālim. His insight into Arabic prose and his writing skills are exceptional, and he is always willing to pass them on to his students. Everyone acclaims his nobility and sincerity, and no one ever had a complaint against him. Nor is he ever known to lose his temper. Only once did we have occasion to become aware of a slight displeasure on his part. Some junior faculty members and I were arguing at the top of our voices outside the office of al-Ra'id¹⁵ while he was inside. As our discussion carried on, he expressed his unhappiness at our wasting time in that way. Yet even in this rebuke, we sensed his love and concern for us:

اک رنگ التفات بھی اس بے رخی میں تھا
اک سادگی بھی اس نگہ سحر فن میں تھی

In that turning away there was a strand of attentiveness.
In that wonder-working eye a pure heart's simplicity.

The subject matter of this work – life at a madrasah – is one very close to my heart. In it I have recounted my association with friends whom I love to this day.

اے ہم نفسان صحبت ما
رہید و لے نہ از دل ما

O you who breathed in our company
You departed, but not from our heart

No doubt, nostalgia in part prompted me to record my memories so that, by occasionally reading this account, I might revive and refresh them. For the days I spent at Nadwah remain for me a precious asset.

جمالک فی عینی وحبک فی قلبی
وذكرک فی فمی فأین تغیب

Your beauty in my eye, your love in my heart
Your mention on my lips – where then could you disappear?

¹⁵ The fortnightly newspaper published in Arabic from Nadwat al-'Ulamā', of which Mawlānā Wāḍiḥ Rashīd Nadwī is the editor.

Introduction

Now I live far removed from my alma mater, yet it has never been far from my thoughts. When I left Nadwah, it was with a heavy heart:

اٹھ کر تو آگئے ہیں تری بزم سے مگر
کچھ دل ہی جانتا ہے کہ کس دل سے آئے ہیں

True, we got up and left the shade of your embrace,
Yet this heart knows a little with what heart we came away.

To conclude, let me clarify that this work holds up a mirror to the life that I knew at Nadwah. The account can only be as accurate as any personal memory of a past time ever is, but it contains no fictive element, nor does it seek to idealise. It does not try to do what the poet Faiz explained in this way: "It was not thus; rather I desired it to be thus."¹⁶

Mohammad Akram Nadwi
Oxford, 16th Muḥarram 1425 AH

¹⁶ Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1884-1911), a poet in the high tradition of Urdu poets like Ghālib and Iqbal.

Madrasah Life



IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MOST MERCIFUL, THE MOST COMPASSIONATE

I AWOKE AT 5 a.m. and recited the supplication, "Praise be to God Who revived us after having caused our death, and to Him is the return". Āftāb 'Ālam A'zamī, my class fellow and room mate in No.6 on the third floor of the Aṭhar hostel, was already awake. He is a very practical person. Although he may not have been conversant with the philosophy of Sufism, he is no less than a Sufi in practice. He is characterised by piety, virtue, honesty, truth, purity and discipline. Whatever task he takes on he does thoroughly. He keeps himself to himself and stays away from joking and frivolity. Since he prefers to be alone, he is usually to be found lost in his thoughts. To this day he maintains those characteristics of his student days; he has not changed at all. He is adept at public speaking and has a thorough grounding in and command of Urdu poetry, while his recitation of the Qur'ān is marked by pathos and melody. When he leads a prayer, those following him desire for him to prolong his recitation. His supplications are long and deeply touched by his devotion and earnestness before God.

أوليس من إحدى العجائب أنني
فارقته وحييت بعد فراقه

Is it not a wonder of the world that I
parted from him and, having parted, still live?

The early morning atmosphere, when most people are lost in sleep, is marked by tranquillity. Some devout slaves of God, notwithstanding their natural inclination to rest and sleep, are engaged in the remembrance of God, recitation of the Qur'an, prayer and supplication. Many Nadwah teachers and some students are particular about getting up early. Some commence their worship in the small hours of the night. Students, however, generally find it hard to get up in the early morning.

After doing *wudu'*, I marvelled at the early morning scene. It appeared as if angels were descending from the heavens and blessing the believers with celestial touches and infusing God-consciousness, fear of God and a strong urge to purify and purge themselves into their hearts and minds. The day began on this beautiful note, in this angelic ambience and with the promise of blessings to the believers, and a glimpse of divine mercy.

آتی ہے مشرق سے جب ہنگامہ در دامن سحر
 منزل ہستی سے کر جاتی ہے خاموشی سفر
 محفل قدرت کا آخر ٹوٹ جاتا ہے سکوت
 دیتی ہے ہر چیز اپنی زندگانی کا ثبوت
 پہنچاتے ہیں پرندے پاکے پیغام حیات
 باندھتے ہیں پھول بھی گلشن میں احرام حیات
 مسلم خوابیدہ اٹھ ہنگامہ آرا تو بھی ہو
 وہ چمک اٹھا افق گرم تقاضا تو بھی ہو
 وسعت عالم میں رہ پیا ہو مثل آفتاب
 دامن گردوں سے ناپیدا ہوں یہ داغ سحاب
 کھینچ کر خنجر کرن کا پھر ہو سرگرم ستیز
 پھر سکھا تاریکی باطل کو آداب گریز

Madrasah Life

Dawn rising from the east is enlivening.
It puts an end to the enveloping silence of the night.
Life manifests itself in every object at dawn.
Birds chirrup, heralding the message of life.
Flowers too, start a new life.
Muslims! Arise and awake from your slumber.
Shine like the sun and seek inspiration from the
symbols of life around you.
Obliterate evil.
Your being full of light should put an end to darkness.
Reveal yourself like a flashing light,
unravelling the secrets of the universe.

The message of life was written large upon everything. Gradually the quiet was replaced with activities of all sorts. Plant life, in particular, reflects the special qualities of morning. All the activity on the natural plane provides a special message to the Muslim youth, prompting him to awaken and arise. He is urged to conquer the forces of nature in order to replace the darkness in the world with light. Through his self-awakening he should bring about changes that would improve the lot of humankind.

Fajr prayer is offered at an early hour at Nadwah. The congregation was at 5.45 am; the call to prayer was sounded half an hour before that. It reminded me of the following passage from Iqbal:¹⁷

اک رات ستاروں سے کہا نجم سحر نے
آدم کو بھی دیکھا ہے کسی نے کبھی بیدار
کہنے لگا مرغ ! ادا فہم ہے تقدیر
بے نیند ہی اس چھوٹے سے فتنے کو سزاوار
زہرہ نے کہا اور کوئی بات نہیں کیا
اس کرک شب کو سے کیا ہم کو سروکار
بولا مہ کامل کہ وہ کوکب ہے زمینی

¹⁷ Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), poet, philosopher, and political leader. See biographical studies by A. A. Beg (1961), A. Schimmel (1963), H. Malik (1971), and S. M. Burney (1987).

واقف ہو اگر لذت بیداری شب سے
 اونچی ہے ثریا سے بھی یہ خاک پر اسرار
 آغوش میں اس کی وہ تجلی ہے کہ جس میں
 کھوجائیں گے افلاک کے سب ثابت و سیار
 ناگاہ نضا بانگ اذان سے ہوئی لبریز
 وہ نعرہ کہ اہل جاتا ہے جس سے دل کہسار

It is couched in this parable: One night, the morning star asked the stars whether man is ever awake. To this, each star responded in its own way. At that moment the *adhān* was sounded, which adequately answered the question. For the call to prayer is a message and invitation that overthrows all falsehood.

The *mu'adhdhin*, Khālid Kānpūrī, is a remarkably gifted person. He is a classmate and close friend. He stands out from others because of his smiling face, attractive appearance, excellent social standards and clear, loud-voice. Even if he does not use a loudspeaker, his *adhān* can be heard at some distance. The *adhān* pronounced by him put an end to silence and quiet. Everyone was reminded of the truth that only God is God. The affirmation of His glory shakes the believers' hearts. Once man recognises His supremacy, he himself masters everything in the world. Nonetheless, there is a world of difference between the verbal utterance of His supremacy and confessing this truth in one's heart and mind. As our right-acting ancestors had imbibed this truth well, they ruled the world. In spite of our utterance of the same words now, however, we Muslims are subservient to everyone. The *adhān* gave us the glad tidings of a new dawn.

یہ سحر جو کبھی فردا ہے کبھی ہے امروز
 نہیں معلوم کہ ہوتی ہے کہاں سے پیدا
 وہ سحر جس سے لرزتا ہے شبستان وجود
 ہوتی ہے بندہ مومن کی اذان سے پیدا

The dawn that is tomorrow, then today,
I don't know from where it rises.
The dawn, which shakes the dark abode of being,
is born of the call (*adhān*) of a believer

Some sleeping students were woken by the *adhān* and rushed to do *wuḍū'*. Yet many were still unmoved, lost in sleep. Hostel monitors woke them. Our warden, Mawlānā Shāhbāz, rises very early. After making supplications and glorifying God, he came to our room, greeting us. 'Umar Laddākhī was busy doing *wuḍū'* while Waliullāh was still asleep. Upon hearing the Mawlānā's greeting he too got up. 'Umar hails from Ladakh and is a class fellow as well as roommate. He is closely associated with the Tablīghī Jamā'at movement. Waliullāh, my other roommate, is junior to me in class. He is the maternal grandson of a leading Muslim scholar, Mawlānā 'Abd al-Shakūr Lakhnawī.

After *wuḍū'* I recited *Sūrat al-Zumar*. Its recitation in the early morning fills my heart with joy. Words fail me in describing the delight I have. I am aware of the tremendous impact of the Qur'ān on the world, how it marks a new dawn in history. It is a pity that some of its custodians are ignorant of its abiding value and power. Tears welled in my eyes on reading the following verse:

*"Say: O My slaves who have transgressed against their own souls!
Do not despair of God's mercy. Surely God forgives all sins. Surely
He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."* al-Zumar 39:53

That verse makes me think deeply and draws me closer to God. On reciting it, I experience such joy that I keep reciting it over and over again. Ever since I heard Mawlānā Wāḍiḥ Rashīd Nadwī elucidate its multiple meanings, and also point out its literary features, this verse has called me to reflection upon reflection. For it reminds me of the numerous bounties of the Lord of the worlds. On reciting God's promise, one is no longer imprisoned by one's sins. One comes out of the darkness emanating from one's sins and gains nearness to the mercy of God. For, out of His overflowing mercy and kindness, God has promised to forgive sins. The Lord of the universe is so close to His slaves, so merciful and compassionate

to them, and forgives their sins so easily, that there is no need for any intermediary with Him. Nor is there any need to seek anyone's intercession of the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, who it is promised will intercede for the wrongdoers of his community. But it is Allah Who forgives. God is the only refuge for His slaves. He alone can redeem a wrongdoer, out of His compassion. I recalled the following couplet:

نہ کہیں جہاں میں اماں ملی جو اماں ملی تو کہاں ملی
میرے جرم خانہ خراب کو ترے عفو بندہ نواز میں

I found no refuge, nor peace, nor security anywhere in the world.
The only refuge I found for my self-destructive sins was in Your
forgiveness, Your bestowing favours upon Your slaves.

It would be fitting here to reflect on the following incident related of Sufyān al-Thawrī, a distinguished jurist and Islamic scholar of exceptional piety. He was nearing death and felt anxious. Someone asked if it was because he had committed many sins. Sufyān picked up a piece of straw and said that he attached no more importance to his sins than to the piece of straw. What terrified him most was the fear of losing his faith while in the throes of death. In that state of anxiety he asked his disciple, 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Mahdī, to summon Ḥammād ibn Salamah. When the latter arrived, Sufyān had fallen unconscious. When he recovered, Ḥammād said to him: "If on the day of judgement God gives me the choice between Him or my mother taking my account, I will opt for God. For His mercy exceeds even a mother's love."

Every morning after reciting the Qur'ān I read the poetical works of Ḥāfiz,¹⁸ Rūmī,¹⁹ or Iqbal. This morning I read the following *ghazal* of Ḥāfiz:

18 Khwājah Shams-al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfiz Shīrāzī (1319-1389), the most famous figure in Persian love poetry, composed some 500 *ghazals*, 42 *rubā'īs*, and a few *qasidahs*. He composed only when he was inspired, and therefore he averaged only about ten *ghazals* every year.

19 Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (d. 1270) is well known for his *Mathnawī* which consists of about 27,000 couplets – the largest poem about the spiritual path ever produced.

اے نسیم سحر آرامگہ یار کجاست
 منزل آں مہ عاشق کش عیار کجاست
 شب تارست ورہ وادی ایمن درپیش
 آتش طور کجا موعده دیدار کجاست
 ہر کہ آمد بہ جهان نقش خرابی دارد
 در خرابات بگوئید کہ ہشیار کجاست
 آں کس است اہل بشارت کہ اشارت داند
 نکتہ ہا ہست بے محرم اسرار کجاست
 ہر سر موی مرا با تو ہزاراں کارست
 ما کجائیم و ملا متگر بیکار کجاست
 باز پرسید ز گیسوی شکن در شکنش
 کاین دل غمزدہ سرگشتہ گرفتار کجاست
 عقل دیوانہ شد آں سلسلہ مشکین کو
 دل زما گوشہ گرفت ابروی دلدار کجاست
 ساقی و مطرب و می جملہ مہیاست
 ولے عیش بے یار مہیا نشود یار کجاست
 حافظ از باد خزاں در چمن دہر مرنج
 فکر معقول بفرما گل بے خار کجاست

O fragrant breeze of morning, Beloved's
 place for resting is where?
 That Moon that takes lovers' lives, that
 Sorcerer's dwelling is where?
 The night is dark and in front is Wadi
 Aiman, the Valley of Safety:
 Where is fire of Sinai, and the promised

place for seeing, is where?
 Whoever comes into this world is bearing
 the mark of a ruinous end:
 You should go and ask in Wine house:
 "One, not drinking, is where?"
 Every tip of each hair of mine has been
 tied to You for a reason;
 But where are we, and the critic who is
 beyond reasoning is where?
 The lover burned from pain of grief of
 being separated from You;
 But You don't ask Yourself: "Lover whose
 grief is suffering, is where?"
 Reason has given way to madness: where is
 that musky long hair?
 Heart left us for the corner: Your eyebrow,
 heart-owning: is where?
 They are all ready: the cup and the Minstrel
 and rose, all are ready.
 Bliss without Beloved is impossible: Beloved
 Who's willing, is where?
 My heart is sick and tired of the cell and the
 mosque of the Shaikh:
 Where's the young Christian; house of
 Master, wine-making, is where?
 Hafiz, don't grieve about Autumn wind
 blowing through the world:
 If you think about it, the rose without
 thorn's wounding, is where?²⁰

Hāfiz's couplets struck a chord in my heart, inspiring love
 for God in me. His couplets cast such a spell on me, that I felt
 compelled to continue enjoying this Divine taste. Since there
 was still some time spare, I continued reading Hāfiz's poetry:

نه هر که چهره بر افروخت دلبری داند
 نه هر که آئینه سازد سکندری داند

20 Divan of Hafiz, English version by Paul Smith; edited by Ann Smith, First
 Edition 1986, New Humanity Books, poem 62. Autumn Wind.

نه هر که طرف کله کج نهاد و تند نشست
کلاه داری و آئین سروری داند
تو بندگی چو گدایان به شرط مزد مکن
که دوست خود روش بنده پروری داند
غلام همت آل رند عافیت سوزم
که در گدا صفحہ کیمیا گری داند
وفا و عہد نکو باشد از بیاموزی
وگرنہ ہر کہ تو بنی ستم گری داند
بیاختم دل دیوانہ وندا نستم
کہ آدی بچہ ای شیوہ پری داند
ہزار نکتہ باریک تر زمو انجاست
نه ہر کہ سر پتراشد قلندری داند
مدار نقطہ بنیش زخال تست مرا
کہ قدر گوہر یکدانہ جوہری داند
بہ قد و چہرہ ہر آل کس کہ شاہ خوباں شد
جہان بگیرد اگر داد گستری داند
ز شعر دلکش حافظ کسے بود آگاہ
کہ لطف طبع و سخن گفتن دری داند

Not every beauty whose face is bright, ways
of a heart stealer knows;
Not everyone who makes a mirror, insight
of an Alexander knows.
Not everyone who wears his cup slanted
and sits up proudly straight,
Can do the work of the crown, or the
worth of a true Ruler knows.

There are a thousand points here that are
finer than the finest hair:
Not every person with a shaven head,
subtlety of a Kalandar knows.
It would be good if you learned faithfulness
and kept the promise:
You'll see that the one not doing this, the
role of dictator knows.
Clearly, the objective of my vision is
centred upon Your dark mole;
For the value of the incomparable black
pearl, the jeweller knows.
I'm drowned in the water flowing from my
eyes but what can I do?
Not everyone who is in the ocean, the way
of a swimmer knows.
I am the slave of whatever that daring
Adventurer may want to do,
Who, the means of turning into an
alchemist a poor beggar, knows.
I staked my heart that was insane, but I did
not really understand
That this being, birthed by Adam, truly an
angel's character knows.
Each One who reigned by form and face
over all of the lovely ones,
Would conquer the world, if each the law
of a justice-giver knows.
Verse of Hafiz that fascinates the heart will
be known by one who
Has natural grace, and the passwords of the
'Doorway' keeper knows.²¹

Ten minutes before the time for the congregation I left for the mosque. Other students were also heading towards the mosque. Everyone was engaged in the remembrance of God, full of devotion for Him. When going for the *fajr* prayer one does not feel like

21 Divan of Hafiz, English version by Paul Smith; edited by Ann Smith, First Edition 1986, New Humanity Books, poem 211. Under the Surface.

talking. Passing by each other you can hear the words ‘*al-salām ‘alaykum*’ (peace be upon you). It calls to mind the scene of the verse: “They shall not hear therein vain or sinful discourse, saying only [the word] peace, peace.”²² On reaching the mosque I saw students of *hifz*²³ busy in their task of memorising the Qur’ān. It is an impressive and delightful sight to see so many young people reciting the Qur’ān inside Nadwah mosque. I first offered two *rak‘ahs* of *sunnah* prayer and waited for the congregation. I cannot forget this amazing scene: we were waiting for prayer to start, and a spiritual light covered us and tranquillity and peace blessed our hearts. After a little while Mawlānā Sa‘īd al-Rahmān arrived. At 5.45 exactly we all rose to pray. The Mawlānā is an eloquent speaker and writer, gifted with a brilliant style, combined with sincerity of purpose. His punctuality is remarkable. He is the editor of *al-Ba‘th al-Islāmī*,²⁴ a scholar of Arabic literature and imām of Nadwah mosque. His mode of Qur’ān recitation is majestic and full of pathos, his modulating voice adding much beauty.

The mosque is filled with devotees, lined in rows. The rows are straight like the lines of text in a book, spreading out. Row upon row, pointing to the sameness and equality of men, like an ear full of grain; all equal, not one less or more important, not one higher or lower. There is no distinction on the basis of status. Khālid said the *iqāmah*; the Mawlānā’s *takbīr* followed, marking the commencement of prayer. The imām’s voice echoed in the mosque and radiated like light, illuminating everything. After reciting *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, he recited *Sūrat al-Mulk*. The latter opens with the glorification of God Who is the King and has power over everything. “Blessed is He in Whose hand is the kingdom, and He has power over all things, Who created death and life that He may try you – which of you is best in deeds; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving. Who created the seven heavens one above another; you see no incongruity in the creation of the Beneficent God; then look again, can you see any disorder? Then turn back the eye again

22 *Sūrat al-Wāqī‘ah* 65-66, a description of Paradise.

23 Memorisation of the Qur’ān.

24 The monthly Arabic magazine issued from Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’.

and again; your gaze will come back to you dazzled and fatigued." His recitation brought to mind the melody of birds, singing in ecstasy. There was a marked note, too, of pathos in his delivery. It emanated from the heart, as if overcome with joy after a long spell of sorrow. The rise and fall of his voice had a direct effect on my heart and mind. We felt as if the Qur'ān was being revealed to us directly. His recitation seemed an inseparable part of the order of the universe. Our hearts were irresistibly drawn towards the Qur'ānic message. It was akin to the absorption of rainwater by plants, which brings about their flourishing. Every object appeared to be in submission, in communion with the Divine. The dawn itself seemed to pause, to halt and seek the Lord's leave, to ask for illumination from that Divine Light before proceeding. We were immersed in the Qur'ān recitation as if nothing else existed, as if all the vanity of the outer world had vanished, and only devout souls inhabited the earth. This spiritual experience helped us transcend our material constraints.

As the verses of Sūrat al-Mulk were being recited, our attention was drawn to the immense signs of Almighty God. He causes life and death. Out of His wisdom He has not created anything in vain. Wherever one casts one's gaze, one is bound to notice His creative power. The coordination of the various components of the universe is amazing. His signs are perfect. One cannot find fault with His signs, no matter how hard one tries. His signs give a clear idea of His presence and help one gain conviction in His being and attributes. It enables one to enjoy nearness with Him. Can an idol worshipper obtain any portion of such a blessing? It is sheer superstition to conceive of God in terms of idols and statues. The verses of Sūrat al-Mulk portray a picture of creation that even the best artist could not paint.

At the time of the *fajr* prayer, Nadwah mosque is filled with such illuminated tranquillity that pure and profound thoughts envelop the mind. In that state I was almost transported to a different world. The mosque is not a mere structure of mortar and cement. The mosque orients the individual to the proper direction. All around us in the world there are numerous forms of deviation, rebellion, guile and evil. The mosque is the refuge against these and the

purification from all kinds of impurity and dirt. At the conclusion of the prayer we greeted the angels. On becoming mindful of the angels' attention towards us, we felt elated.

I stayed inside the mosque for a while after the prayer. Many were still engaged in the remembrance and glorification of God. Some were reciting the Qur'ān while students of *ḥifẓ* were revising their lessons. The Qur'ān recitation was a fascinating spectacle, and it enchanted us. I did not feel like leaving the mosque. For nothing could be more attractive than the light of the remembrance of God permeating the mosque. Now I can understand why our righteous ancestors did not like to talk to anyone after the dawn prayer until after sunrise. How much the world is in need of such a spiritual environment. Even angels are likely to envy someone whose heart is illuminated with such a spiritual light.

While I was preoccupied with these thoughts, Ibrāhīm finished his glorification of God, and led me out of the mosque. He is my senior by a few years, and is a teacher of Arabic literature and grammar. He is frank and open with me. His knowledge is sound and deep and he has remarkable clarity of mind. Whatever he says has a profound message. He is highly sociable and informal, and there is hardly any difference between his private and public self. Since my first meeting with him, I have seen him in the habit of chewing betel leaves and wearing the same *sherwānī*.²⁵ His friends ask him to place his *sherwānī* in a museum, but Ibrāhīm holds fast to the *sunnah* of wearing the cloth until it is worn out.

As I moved out along with Ibrāhīm I looked for the spiritual light that was visible on the faces of the devotees. Some students had returned to their hostel to recite the Qur'ān. Some had gone back to bed, as they had studied until late at night. Some went for a walk beside the Gomti River while some were having tea at the canteen inside. Others went jogging or exercising in small groups on the football field. Life was in full swing, though it was still early morning.

As we came out of the mosque, we found Bābar and Ḥashmatullāh waiting for us. Bābar is quite senior yet he is very friendly towards

²⁵ Indian coat.

us. His conversation is charming and his manners most agreeable. You can tell from his deportment that he is the descendant of a noble family. Ḥashmatullāh is my classmate and is second to none in intelligence and in his understanding of Arabic. He has a special flair for writing in Arabic. His eloquence and his command over Arabic grammar are enviable.

Usually, the four of us go for a morning walk together. Early March mornings are quite pleasant, because it is neither too hot nor too cold. One is reminded of the observation of the poet Josh Malihābādī²⁶ that on witnessing the spectacle of morning one is persuaded to believe in God. As a matter of fact, each one of His creations is unique. The spectacle of dawn is undoubtedly marvellous. It is a pity that many fail to witness this remarkable scene. Who can dispute the deprivation of one in whose life morning has never risen?

Ibrāhīm has a special interest in grammar. If he is around, discussion on some grammatical issue tend to be imminent. In contrast, Bābar has no interest in it. The latter enjoys our company but cannot abide Ibrāhīm's obsession with grammar. This morning he decided to recount his life in Madinah. It was a preemptive move to forestall Ibrāhīm starting up on grammarians such as Sībawayh, or Ibn Jinnī, or Ibn Hishām, or the grammar schools of Kufah, Basrah and Baghdad. Bābar informed us in detail about the teachers and teaching method at the International Islamic University of Madinah. According to him, Mawlānā Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān's presence was a source of strength for Indian students in Madinah. His circles at Masjid al-Nūr provided much food for thought. He had drawn many learned people to the cause of *da'wah*. He made an intensive study of the *Sīrah* there, spending, for example, a few days at the mountain of Uḥud in order to grasp better the details of the battle of Uḥud. He was an authority on the local history of Madinah. His commitment to the *sunnah* was deep. He would recite the supplications recommended by the Prophet, peace be upon him, and recorded in ḥadīth collections, with conviction. On his

²⁶ Josh Malihābādī (1898–1982), a noted poet of India, famed for his masterly command of the Urdu language and his strictness in respecting grammar and the rules of language.

return to Madinah after doing *‘umrah*, he had to camp in the wild; in accordance with a reported ḥadīth, he drew a line in the ground around himself and his fellow travellers, then recited a supplication, seeking God’s protection against all evil. The next morning they found snakes and scorpions crawling near their camp, just outside the line he had drawn. Thanks to God’s answer to the supplication, the snakes and scorpions had not harmed them. The freshness of the morning and this account strengthened our faith. The mercy of God was evident in the shaykh’s story.

Bābar cited several examples of Mawlānā Sa‘īd Aḥmad Khān’s scholarship and scientific research. I then recalled how, when we were sitting with him in the Tablīghī Centre of Hazrat Nizam al-Din in Delhi, he had asked us what is the translation of the last verse of Sūrat al-Fātiḥah: *غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ*. A student repeated the popular translation: “Not the path of those who earn anger, nor of those who go astray”. The Mawlānā said: “This translation is incorrect.” One of the students of Nadwah, realising what he meant, said: “This verse *غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ* is adjectival, qualifying the last phrase of the previous verse *الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ* “those whom You have blessed”. The correct translation is: ‘Not those with whom You are angered, nor those who go astray.’” The Mawlānā was pleased with this explanation, and then fully elucidated the verse.

This recollection, however, provided Ibrāhīm with the perfect moment to affirm the importance of grammar. He asserted that knowledge of grammar is the key to understanding the secrets of the Qur’ān and the complexities of ḥadīth. In his writings on grammar Ibn Hishām illustrates his points with instances from the Qur’ān and ḥadīth. It helps readers resolve many problems and grasp difficult passages. He cited a verse from Sūrat al-Shu‘arā’, *وَسَيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ*, and asked Bābar to explain why *أَيَّ* is in the accusative case. The latter replied: “Is it difficult to explain this? Even first and second year students know that *أَيَّ* is an object of *سَيَعْلَمَ*.” Ibrāhīm exclaimed triumphantly that when scholars can commit such gross mistakes, it constitutes a weighty proof of the importance and relevance of grammar, and it strengthens his belief in the usefulness of grammar. The word *أَيَّ* here is *maf’ūl mutlaq*

of يتقلبون. In constructions like this يعلم does not act. That is why grammarians like Ibn Hishām and others refer to it as *ta'liq*, i.e. suspended.

Hashmatullāh commented to Ibrāhīm: "The ears are tired of hearing from you the names of Ibn Hishām, *Sharḥ Qaṭr al-nadā* and *Sharḥ shudhūr al-dhahab* all the time. No doubt there is no one equal to Ibn Hishām among later grammarians. Ibn Khaldūn, the leading figure on the philosophy of history, has rightly said: 'ما زلنا ونحن بالمغرب نسمع أنه ظهر بمصر عالم بالعربية يقال له ابن هشام، أتى من سيوهيه We have heard, while we were in the West, that there has appeared in Egypt a scholar of Arabic called Ibn Hishām, who is a greater expert of grammar than Sibawayh.' Nadwah authorities had introduced a new dimension in the syllabus of madrasahs by prescribing Ibn Hishām's works. Prior to this, the study was confined to *al-Kāfiyah* of Ibn Ḥājjib and its commentary by Mullā Jāmī. Shibli's²⁷ comment 'فيه كل شيء إلا النحو' In it there is everything except grammar' is very meaningful. But by paying excessive attention to Ibn Hishām we are committing the same mistake, which has been made until now with Ibn Ḥājjib and Mullā Jāmī."

Hashmat's comments were somewhat hard, I thought, and said aloud that it was impractical to include the works of all the grammarians in the syllabus. At Nadwah, *Sharḥ qaṭr al-nadā* and *Sharḥ shudhūr al-dhahab* are already part of the syllabus. At the advanced level, Ibn Mālik's *Alfiyyah*, Ibn 'Aqīl's gloss on the *Alfiyyah*, and *Mufaṣṣal* are also taught. It is unrealistic to go beyond these works, for the entire syllabus cannot be focussed on grammar. Bābar, who has a distaste for the whole topic of grammar, quipped that at the first available opportunity grammar should be dropped from the syllabus altogether.

27 Mawlānā Shibli Nu'mānī (1857-1914) received his education from the most learned people of this time. He travelled to the Hijāz before joining Aligarh Muslim University as Professor of Arabic and Persian in 1882. In order to do research for his books he travelled to Egypt, Rome and Syria and on his return published a travelogue. He then accepted the position in the Department of Education in Hyderabad. He joined the movement of Nadwat al-'Ulumā' as an active and leading member, later establishing Dār al-Musanafin in Azamgarh. His important books are *al-Ma'mūn*, *al-Fāriq*, *Sirat al-Nabī*, *Ilm al-kalām*, *Shi'r al-'ajam*, *Muwāznah-i anis wa dabir*.

While engaged in our discussion we had walked as far as Begum Hazrat Mahal Park. It was time to turn back, since we had to take breakfast, revise our lessons and reach our classroom on time. Classes start at 8.00 am and it was already 6.15 am. On the way back Ḥashmat, as usual, ignored Bābar's interruptions and resumed his conversation saying: "I did not mean to criticise the syllabus. It upsets me to see Ibrāhīm and other teachers of grammar placing such a high premium on Ibn Hishām's works on grammar. Why not supplement our knowledge by going beyond the textbooks? Since we follow this practice in the study of other disciplines, why not do the same with regard to grammar? To gain mastery over Arabic idiom and expertise in grammar, why are these classics not being studied – Sībawayh's *al-Kitāb*, al-Mubarrid's *al-Kāmil*, Ibn Qutaybah's *Adab al-kātib*, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* and Jāhiz's *al-Bayān wa al-tabyīn*? Notwithstanding our admiration for Ibn Hishām, let us not forget that Ibn Hishām has, in the footsteps of other later grammarians, constricted grammatical rules with the definitions and categorisations of logic. This has partly dislodged its spirit. As for elementary and abridged works, these give only an outline of a discipline; they do not help master any area of study.

I agreed with Ḥashmat, adding that the same error of perspective mars our study of the principles of jurisprudence. Generally, students rest content with *Uṣūl al-shāshī* and *al-Ḥusāmī*, complacent that they have attained sufficient knowledge of the principles of *fiqh*. Yet these two works are only introductory works, familiarising students only with basic principles. After studying these, they must study *Uṣūl al-sarakhsī*, *Uṣūl al-bazdawī*, al-Shāfiʿī's²⁸ *al-Risālah*, al-ʿĀmidī's *al-Ihkām*, al-Shāṭibī's *al-Muwāfaqāt* and the writings of Ibn Ḥazm carefully and in depth.

Engaged in our discussion, we returned to Nadwah campus. As part of our routine we passed by the buildings of the Dār al-ʿUlūm, the Shiblī Library and *al-Rāʿid* office. Hashmat carried his point further, asserting that the study of introductory and abridged works had dealt a severe blow to scholarship. Take another discipline, logic,

²⁸ Imām Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204 AH), one of the most eminent jurists and founder of one of the four schools of Sunnī jurisprudence.

as illustration, he suggested. Students read, at most, *al-Mirqāt* and *al-Sullam*. Few among them can boast of having studied Ibn Sinā's *al-Shifā'* and Imām Ibn Taymiyyah's *al-Radd 'alā al-mantiqiyyīn*. There is a general trend of decline in the standard of learning. Study of grammar is, in particular, neglected. It is widely perceived as a dry, difficult subject. Students must, at least, read the works of Jāhīz and Ibn Jinnī.

As we passed by al-Rā'id office, we met 'Uthmān, manager of *al-Rā'id* magazine. He is Ibrāhīm's class fellow and our mutual friend. He is from Unnao and a person of gentle manners. He lives in a flat near his office. While we were busy talking with him, Riḍwān spotted us. He is a colleague of Ibrāhīm and we know him through his younger brother, Iḥsān. Riḍwān also lives in a flat above *al-Rā'id* office. On seeing us he said that he had been looking for us to invite us to breakfast, and told us that he had cooked some very nice *nahārī*. We readily accepted his invitation. Whenever there is breakfast at the home of Riḍwān, Khālīd must be there. Riḍwān sent one of his students to call Khālīd to breakfast. As we sat in his house, Bābar told him that we had spoiled the morning walk. "At such a pleasant time they continued their discussion on grammar. They neither had a feeling for the occasion, nor did they look at the beautiful morning scenery. What is the point of going on a walk on the bank of the Gomti, if one overlooks natural beauty altogether? I was reminded of a humorous piece in Urdu by Sajjād Ḥaydar Yaldarim entitled 'Save me from my friends', which provides an interesting account of the distress the author has to undergo at the hands of his uncaring friends. I could echo his sentiments and say: 'Save me from those friends who are obsessed with grammar.'"

'Uthmān tried to cheer him up, saying: "Why are you so upset with Ibrāhīm, Ḥashmatullāh and Akram? At least these are a few of the people who make life so interesting at Nadwah, and they contribute in their own ways to the life on the campus. They have a right to say:

یادگار زمانہ ہیں ہم لوگ
یاد رکھنا فسانہ ہیں ہم لوگ

We people are the souvenir of the time;
And remember we are the stories that will be told

Bābar agreed with ‘Uthmān, but still insisted that grammar should be dropped from Nadwah syllabus. Riḍwān supported Bābar with the contention that it is assumed that competence in grammar helps one gain spoken and written skills. However, it is an outdated notion. One can do well without grammar and one can master Arabic language in other ways. Mawlānā Muḥammad al-Ḥasanī stands out as living proof of that. The hallmarks of his style are missing from those writers who learnt Arabic through grammar. His *al-Islām al-mumtaḥan*, apart from being a perceptive analysis of Islamic thought, is a literary masterpiece. Taking his cue from this example, Bābar quoted Mawlānā Wāḍiḥ’s observation that no authority on Arabic grammar has distinguished himself as a literary master. Grammarians no doubt demonstrate their familiarity with idiom, archaic expressions, lexical issues and may be masters of the dictionaries of the Ḥijāz, yet they cannot articulate their ideas attractively. I pointed out to Bābar that, according to Mawlānā Wāḍiḥ, al-Zamakhsharī is an exception to this rule. He was both an expert on Arabic language and a stylist. His writings are reflective of his literacy craftsmanship and high linguistic taste.

Yet Bābar kept on expressing his distaste for grammar and grammarians. For him, “they are akin to scientists who conduct a thorough study of nature, analyse even the smallest object in order to ascertain truth, yet are not enchanted by the beauty and grandeur of nature. Even while studying a rose they only focus microscopically on its constituent parts. If they see a beautiful and attractive face they are unmoved by its beauty. Rather, their interest lies in its skeleton. On the contrary, when a poet looks at the same rose and the same beauty, he admires its charms and communicates the same in figurative language. A poet, a literary person and an artist possess a strong sense of aesthetic beauty. A grammarian is hardly concerned with the literary merits of a work and focuses only on finding fault. One comes across few illustrations of remarkable literary worth in their works. *Mu‘allaqāt* and other poetical works

of Arab masters abound in examples of poetic excellence. Yet they point only to couplets which have some grammatical problems, like the following:

ولو أن ما أسعى لأدنى معيشة
كفاني ولم أطلب قليل من المال

If my striving had been for only a minimal livelihood,
A little wealth would have sufficed me, and I would not
have sought more.

All grammarians feel obliged to cite the above couplets in order to illustrate that this is not the example of *tanāzu' fi' layn* – two verbs contesting a link with the same noun. Accordingly, they have little interest in the literary excellence of the Qur'ān and the miraculous impact of it. What catches their attention, however, is the variant recitation of some verse. Instead of the reading: *إن هذان لساحران*, “These are two magicians...” they are more concerned with the reading: *إن هذان* because it presents unusual grammatical issues. Grammarians, likewise, have no taste for the Prophetic language. They repeated the following phrase: *ليس من أمر اصيام في اسفر* ‘it is not a part of being devout to fast while travelling’ so many times that it became the standard one.²⁹ Alas! This is bad taste, and shame on those who call it knowledge.” While Bābar continued his attack, Khālid joined us. As he entered, he said: “And alas for those who catch the fragrance of such delicious food and yet neither appreciate it, nor stretch out their hands.”

This marked the beginning of our breakfast. The *nahārī* was indeed delicious, underscoring Riḍwān's skill in cooking. We thought this break would save us from Bābar's persistent attack on the study of grammar. However, he continued his trenchant criticism. We turned to Khālid for intervention. Khālid asked Bābar not to exert himself too much on this issue. “Advocates of both stances, for and against grammar-centred study, have been at Nadwah since its inception. Were not Mawlānā Sayyid Sulaymān

²⁹ The point being that this hadith is in a Yemeni dialect because of the man to whom the Messenger spoke, peace be upon him, in which dialect the definite article, which is ordinarily *al*, became *am*.

Nadwī and Mawlānā Abū al-ʿIrfān Nadwī committed heart and soul to the study of grammar, while others opposed this approach? And yet both groups flourished. This in itself demonstrates the success of the idea of Nadwah. Both of these camps are represented at this very breakfast table. We should not insist on a kind of dull, colourless sameness. Why do we insist that a garden be full of the same flowers? Variety constitutes the real beauty of the garden. Not only in the study of grammar, but in other disciplines such as *fiqh* and *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* studies, a multiplicity of approaches and schools of thought are admissible at Nadwah.”

Khālid’s fair and balanced intervention delighted us, for it enabled us to focus on the delicious breakfast and tea and to indulge in some refreshing, light conversation. Moreover, there was little time left. We had to return to our hostel by 7.30 am. Riḍwān, however broached another serious topic. He had taken specialist courses on *tafsīr* and Qur’ānic studies at Madinah University. He earned his degree this year and had been appointed as a teacher of *tafsīr* at Nadwah. For days he had been asking me to have a discussion with him on Mawlānā Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī’s concept of *Niẓām al-qur’ān*. As Bābar stopped, Riḍwān availed himself of the opportunity to raise the issue of this *niẓām* – the order, coherence and contextual harmony in the Qur’ān. Although I drew his attention to the very little time at our disposal, and that we could not pursue very much discussion, he persisted. I suggested that we consult Mawlānā Shāhbāz, who is an authority on Farāhī’s approach to the Qur’ān. Mawlānā Farāhī was a devout, insightful scholar who had given his whole life to study of the Qur’ān. The fruits of his life-long study of the Qur’ān are found in his works *Asālib al-Qur’ān*, *Dalā’il al-niẓām*, *Muqadimmah tafsīr niẓām al-Qur’ān* and *Mufradāt al-Qur’ān*. His *Jamharat al-balāghah* is a unique book on its topic, as it illustrates the rules of rhetoric in an original manner. Shiblī has offered a good introduction to this work in his articles. Farāhī’s other writings also stand out for their originality and freshness of approach, namely *al-Ra’y al-ṣaḥīḥ fī man huwa al-dhabīḥ*, and *al-Im’ān fī aqsām al-Qur’ān*. Reading these one gains a clear picture of Farāhī’s mind.

Contributing to the discussion on Farāhī, I pointed out that classical writers, predating Farāhī, had also had a clear understanding of coherence in the Qur'ān. Almost every *tafsīr* seeks to bring out the connections and contextual relations between Qur'ānic verses. Farāhī was alive to the significance of this feature and carried out a sustained study. As a result, he developed his thesis in a very convincing way. Farāhī's thesis is that every Qur'ānic chapter is thematically related to the chapters immediately preceding and following it. The same holds true, according to him, for the verses, which are interrelated with one another. The fact that the compilation of *sūrah*s (chapters) in the Qur'ān, under the guidance of the Prophet, peace be upon him, was different from the order in which they were revealed to him is testimony to this very coherence. Farāhī's exposition is undoubtedly persuasive. Yet he is not equally successful in identifying the connection between each and every verse, but then he never claims to be bale to do that, nor could that realistically be expected. In any case, one can and may differ with his stance.

While I continued my argument, Ibrāhīm asked me to cite a good example to illustrate my point. I presented the following one, on Mawlānā Shahbāz's authority. Farāhī's claim is that his theory of coherence helps one to avoid some of the mistakes in interpretation, which have crept into *tafsīr* literature. The instance in point is verse 40 of Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, proclaiming: ولكن رسول، وما كان محمد أباً أحد من رجالكم، - الله وخاتم النبيين - *"Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of God, and the seal of the Prophets."* Misconstruing this verse, the Qādyānīs maintain that the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him, had a seal of prophethood. Any prophet who followed him would be endorsed by his seal. Thus no permanent or independent prophet will appear. This Qādyānī notion betrays their ignorance of the proper context of the above verse. In the light of the theory of coherence, this Qur'ānic verse may be explained satisfactorily thus: in accord with Arab customs, an adopted son was regarded as a real son. In the Qur'ān God abolished this custom. He therefore commanded that people should be identified as their father's sons. Zayd, who was the Prophet's adopted son, had

been called Zayd, the son of Muḥammad. After the revelation of the above *surah*, however, he was no longer described as such, but was called Zayd ibn Ḥārithah, ascribing him to his father. At the Prophet's behest Zayd had married Zaynab. However, it was not a successful marriage and Zayd divorced her, which hurt her all the more. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was commanded by God to marry Zaynab. However, people reproached him for marrying his 'daughter-in-law'. Since in the Qur'ān God intended to end the above practice regarding adopted children, He clarified that the Prophet, peace be upon him, is not the father of any man. This being the case, there was nothing wrong in his marrying Zaynab. This could, however, have given rise to the question of why he had to marry her. To answer this, the Qur'ān affirmed that he is the Messenger of God. In this capacity, he is to put an end to the ignoble traditions of the *jāhiliyah* period. One could also ask why such a great Messenger had to do this. Other prophets coming after him could have accomplished this. In reply the Qur'ān declares that no prophet will ever follow him, for he, peace be upon him, is the seal of the Prophets. It was therefore his duty to end this custom. Everyone appreciated this example.

It was 7.30 am when we finished our breakfast and discussion. Taking our leave of Riḍwān, we returned. Students were on their way to Dār al-'Ulūm. As we passed by the canteen we saw that it was overcrowded, since everyone had to finish their breakfast and reach their class by 8 am. The main items served for breakfast were *pūrī*, vegetable curry, *biryānī*, butter, toast, omelette, bread and tea. The canteen staff were busy serving the students. Khālīd, Ḥashmatullāh and I stayed in the Aṭṭar hostel and we rushed to our rooms.

In the mornings I had been studying Ibn Ḥazm's *Muḥallā*. Although I was late, I did not like to miss it. So as usual, I read a part of it. Ibn Ḥazm's arguments are not so weighty in my opinion. What impresses me more is the degree of intellectual freedom enjoyed by scholars when Islam was in its heyday. Their independent thinking and reasoning led to the creation of a healthy society. There was neither strife nor ill will between scholars, though their opinions varied. This brought to mind Yūnus al-Ṣadafī's observation: "I have

not seen anyone wiser than Imām al-Shāfi‘ī. I had a disagreement with the Imām about a matter. After intense debate we parted company. A few days later, the Imām met me and, holding my hand, emphasised that despite our divergence of opinion on the matter, we should live as brothers.” To me, Nadwah curriculum conveys the same message and seeks to restore this past glory. Notwithstanding our adherence to principles, we should have enough breadth of mind to accommodate differences of opinion. We should not let peripheral differences in interpretation drag us into sectarianism and parochialism.

While I was studying, Āftāb, ‘Umar and Waliullāh invited me to breakfast, as we usually had it together. I said to them: “Say *bismillāh* and begin, as I have just had my breakfast.”

At 7.45 am the bell rang, alerting us that we must be inside our classrooms within 15 minutes. Āftāb, ‘Umar and myself hurried to Dār al-‘Ulūm. Other students were also on their way, moving quickly. Our class fellow and hostel mate, Raḍī al-Islām, joined us. He is a promising, ambitious student with a flair for writing and a thorough grounding in various disciplines. He has a clear mind and his argumentation is clear. As a result, his reasoning is not marked by any gaps or contradictions. He writes well and has a moving style. He told us about his master’s dissertation,³⁰ especially his research and academic accomplishments. His topic of study is the prophet Ibrāhīm’s mission. He has collected an abundance of research material, pointing to the preeminence of the prophet Ibrāhīm in all the major world faiths. Even Hinduism reflects his impact, in that Brahma is said by some to have been an extremely distorted version of his towering personality.

We entered the Dār al-‘Ulūm building, greeting and talking to teachers and students. When we had passed by the same building on our morning walk, it had been empty. By now all the offices were open and the classrooms full of students. Nadwah now displayed its glory in full. Our classroom was on the first floor while on

30. An important feature of Nadwah curriculum is to foster in students a critical faculty for debate and research and to train them to write cogent, effectively argued pieces on scholarly topics. As part of this training, every student of *‘alimiyyah* and *faḍīlah* writes a dissertation in his final year. Without this, he cannot receive his degree.

the ground floor there are mostly offices. The office of *al-Ba‘th al-Islāmī* is also situated there. As my classmates headed towards the classroom, I went to the office of *al-Ba‘th al-Islāmī* to submit another instalment of my translation of *Bustān al-Muḥaddithīn*.³¹

‘Abd al-Ḥayy received me warmly in the office and informed me that he had a special *kofte* dish prepared for lunch and that I should join him along with our other friends. He had been my classmate in the ‘*alimiyah*’ course and is now manager of *al-Ba‘th*. A sincere friend of generous nature and excellent manners, he is a very good conversationalist and thus dominates any gathering. Wit is his forte – he is always cracking jokes, one after another. One is not bored in his company. His wit indicates his intelligence. His devotion to his friends, too, is remarkable, and he looks for opportunities to do them favours – a gentleman through and through. I recalled Mīr’s couplet with reference to the good nature of ‘Abd al-Ḥayy:

پیدا کہاں ہیں ایسے پرانندہ طبع لوگ
افسوس تم کو میر سے صحبت نہیں رہی

Wherever can we find people of such a temperament?

Alas! You never kept company with Mīr

I then reached my classroom. Mawlānā Burhān al-Dīn Sambhalī taught the first period. He teaches us *Hujjatullāh al-bālighah* of Shāh Waliullāh Dihlawī.³² One of the senior faculty members of Dār al-‘Ulūm, he is committed heart and soul to his academic career and giving scholarly discourse. His other outstanding features are his gentle manners and the favours he does for everyone. He

³¹ This valuable work, introducing the major ḥadīth collections was written in Persian by Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Muḥaddith Dihlawī. At the suggestion of my esteemed teacher, Mawlānā Sayyid Slamān Ḥusaynī, I was translating it into Arabic, my efforts being serialised in the periodical *al-Ba‘th al-Islāmī*. The translation into English by Aisha Bewley is also published by Turath Publishing.

³² Shāh Waliullāh Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-‘Umarī al-Dihlawī (d. 1176 AH), a great reviver of Islam and ḥadīth specialist of the Indian subcontinent. He is the major ḥadīth link in the subcontinent. He authored more than fifty books, and left a large number of students and disciples who continued his mission after his death. All the major Indian madrasahs stand indebted to him.

is punctual in his class and teaches spiritedly. Everyone takes his lectures seriously – no nonsense and no jokes. His class reminds one of what one has heard of the seriousness of Imām Mālik's sessions. His lecture today is on the classification of knowledge, which rested with the Prophet, peace be upon him. This discussion covers a whole page in *Hujjatullāh*. Mawlānā Sambhalī stated that Shāh Waliullāh's account is marked by its eloquence, clarity, coherence and concision.

According to Shāh Waliullāh, there are two main types of ḥadīth. To one category belong those related to the teachings of the Prophet's mission. These deal with the Hereafter, wonders of the creation, modes of worship, transactions between people, social relations and statecraft. Ḥadīth on the Hereafter and the wonders of the unseen creation are based wholly on divine revelation. As to the ḥadīth on legislation, these represent both the revelation and *ijtihād*. The second category of ḥadīth, for example, those on medicine are not linked to the Prophetic mission. These are rooted in experience, and are not derived from revelation. Many of the scholars have said that the Prophet, peace be upon him, did certain acts as a matter of custom or by chance and not deliberately in his role as Prophet, as the teacher of his community. These have nothing to do with worship. In some ḥadīth he recounts the stories of his community, for instance, the ḥadīth of Umm Zar^c, which relates how eleven women gathered and decided to discuss their husbands, without concealing anything. Each one of them did so, the last being Umm Zar^c. Her account of her husband excited everyone's envy. Upon hearing this, the Prophet, peace be upon him, told his wife ʿĀ'ishah: "I am to you as Abū Zar^c is to Umm Zar^c."

At the end, I raised the question that in the ḥadīth collections of both al-Bukhārī and Muslim,³³ the entire ḥadīth is *mawqūf* except for the last sentence, and it is narrated by ʿĀ'ishah, whereas Shāh Waliullāh has classified it in the category of ḥadīth representing the Prophet's knowledge. To this the Mawlānā replied that the above ḥadīth is no doubt attributed to ʿĀ'ishah in these two collections.

³³ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī (261 AH) author of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, which is considered next to the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Imām al-Bukhārī in authenticity.

However, al-Nasa'i's report, as narrated by 'Abbād ibn Manşūr, leaves no doubt about this being a ḥadīth which is *marfū'*, meaning that it is ascribed to the Prophet, peace be upon him. In al-Nasa'i's words. "'A'isha states that the Prophet, peace be upon him, told her: 'I am to you as Abū Zar' was to Umm Zar'. She asked: 'May my parents be sacrificed for you. Who was Abū Zar'?' It was then that he related the whole account." Some others have also classified this ḥadīth as *marfū'*. Therefore Shāh Waliullāh was correct to mention this ḥadīth as an illustration of the general point.

Shāh Waliullāh's classification dispels doubts about some ḥadīth. In this respect, I was reminded of Dr Aḥmad Amīn's reservations about certain authentic ḥadīth, reservations which proceed mainly from his ignorance of this classification. His objection to Umm Zar's report is that the gathering of eleven women and their discussion about their respective husbands is not plausible. To him, it is an example of a fabricated ḥadīth. Had Aḥmad Amīn been familiar with Shāh Waliullāh's classification of ḥadīth, he would have realised that the reference was to a report that was popular in Arabia and that the Prophet, peace be upon him, had related it in the same sense.

The second lecture, at 8.45 am, was on *Sharḥ ma'anī al-āthār* of Imām al-Taḥāwī³⁴, taught to us by Muftī Ṣahūr. He is the Deputy Rector and renowned for his intelligence, breadth of scholarship, insight and command of *fiqh*. His thoroughness enhances his insights into *fiqh*. Nevertheless, at Nadwah he is more involved with administration and construction work. As a result, he finds little time for teaching, generally arriving late for class. Utilising this opportunity, we turned to Ja'far, who has recently finished reading the Urdu poet Josh Malihābādī's autobiography, *Yādon kī bārāt*. Ja'far, a descendant of a noble family, is a promising scholar and a good-natured, decent young man. He speaks little and is not provoked by anything, never losing his balance and poise, or complaining or holding a grudge. Nobody has ever seen him lose his temper. Although he loves the company of others, he is better known for taciturnity.

34 Abū Ja'far Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Salāmāh al-Taḥāwī (d. 321 AH) a well-known ḥanafī traditionist, and author of many excellent works on ḥadīth.

We asked his opinion on the autobiography he had studied. This work was then in the news at Nadwah a great deal. Three works of this genre³⁵ had gained much popularity at Nadwah: i) Mawlānā ‘Abd al-Mājid Daryābādī’s *Āp bītī*, ii) Josh’s *Yādon kī bārāt*, and iii) Kalīm ‘Ājiz³⁶’s *Woh jō merī shā‘irī kā sabab huwā*.

Some reviewers have over-praised Josh’s work. Josh is no doubt a towering Urdu literary figure, extolled by many, and given the status of al-Lāt and Manāt in the temple of literature. Most of my friends have not read this book so far. On being asked to give his opinion on it, Ja‘far said that it is no doubt a fascinating book; Josh is an accomplished writer. But he also exhibits the weak points of his character in it: the work betrays his boastfulness and his ambition for fame. It is a voluminous work, running to 752 pages. Josh is known for composing long poems. He has tried to maintain the same distinction in his prose. What is nonetheless most striking about this book is its flouting all religious and moral codes. Brazenly he claims that the Qur’ān, God forbid, is not divine revelation. He has hurled abuses at the Prophet’s Companions. In recounting his eighteen love affairs, he has revealed in full the dark side of his character. He claims to be a lover from birth saying: “جی ہاں خاکسار مادر زاد عاشق تھا”. In the book he also boasts of his unbridled addiction to wine.

مجھے دیکھ کر کہتی ہے میری دایہ
یہ لڑکا قدح خوار پیدا ہوا ہے

Looking at me the nurse says:
“This child is a born drinker.”

For Josh, love is synonymous with sexual promiscuity. He cannot appreciate any other dimension of love. He feels no qualms

35 Mawlānā Muḥammad Ja‘far’s *Kālā pānī* (Exile) is the first autobiography in Urdu. Mawlānā Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwī recommended its study to us. At Nadwah the following Arabic autobiographies were acclaimed: Aḥmad Amīn’s *Ḥayātī* and Tāhā Ḥusayn’s *al-Ayyām*. The former was, at one point, part of the syllabus for ‘āliyah thānīyah. Students were examined in it. Its study enabled them to familiarise themselves with everyday Arabic.

36 Kalīm ‘Ājiz (1920 -), a renowned and respected Urdu poet, has left an indelible mark on Indian literature.

of conscience in having sexual relations with prostitutes. In sum, he has transgressed every limit in debauchery.

جس کو خدا کی شرم ہے وہ مرد دین ہے
 دنیا کی جس کو شرم ہے مرد شریف ہے
 جس کو کسی کی شرم نہیں اس کو کیا کہوں
 فطرت کا وہ رذیل ہے دل کا کثیف ہے

One who is shy before God is a man of religion.
 One who is shy before the world is a man of nobility.
 One who has no shame – what shall I call him? –
 he is mean of nature and evil of heart.

إذا رزق الفتى وجها وقوحا
 تصرف في الأمور ما يشاء

If the young person has a shameless face
 then he will behave in all affairs as he desires.

It would not be wrong to say that he takes Freud's theories about the sexual urges and their gratification literally. While Ja'far was offering his observations the Muftī arrived, which meant that our discussion remained unfinished. Today's lesson was *Kitāb al-hajj, bāb: mā yalbasu al-muḥrim min al-thiyāb*. This began with the following ḥadīth:

Imām al-Ṭahāwī cited a ḥadīth on Ibn 'Abbās's authority that he heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, declaring on the day of 'Arafah that someone who has no *izār* may put on trousers, and someone who has no sandals may wear shoes. After referring to its various chains of narrations, Imām al-Ṭahāwī points out that in the light of this ḥadīth, one group follows the above directive unqualifiedly. A second group of scholars, however, differs and maintains that the concession is only for exceptional circumstances, and anyone resorting to it should pay a penalty. The ḥadīth, it is true, does not rule out a penalty. Additionally, the second group does not say anything contrary to the ḥadīth. For it is not their contention

that one must not wear trousers and shoes under any circumstances. Had they contended so, it would have been in disagreement with the ḥadīth. They permit what the Prophet, peace be upon him, permitted. Their imposition of a penalty is based on several weighty arguments. For the ḥadīth may be taken to mean that in exceptional circumstances one should redesign his shoes as sandals and his trousers as an *izār*. This group further affirms that if this is the meaning of the ḥadīth, then they do not oppose it in any way. Rather, they affirm it and support it. They do not differ with the other group about the ḥadīth itself, rather their divergence of opinion proceeds from the interpretation of the ḥadīth. They have interpreted this ḥadīth in a sense that is conceivable from its wording.

The following observation of Imām al-Ṭaḥāwī is invaluable. It exposes the falsity of those who accuse leading imāms of having contradicted ḥadīth. According to al-Ṭaḥāwī, a difference in interpreting a ḥadīth should not be taken to mean any opposition to the ḥadīth itself. Opposition to a particular interpretation of a ḥadīth is different from opposition to the ḥadīth itself. One who differs in interpretation should not be accused of contradicting the ḥadīth. This is followed up with several examples, which vindicate the ḥanafī position.

Our teacher, the Muftī, emphasised the point that we must try to comprehend the sources and the arguments on which the opinions of the imāms and leading jurists are based. One should not sit in judgement on their rulings. Nor should adherents of such rulings be reproached unreasonably. “*Al-bayyi‘ān bi al-khiyār*” – both the buyer and seller have a choice as long as they are not separated – is a familiar ḥadīth, reported also by Imām Mālik.³⁷ His inference from it is identical to the ḥanafī position on the issue. They interpret the ḥadīth in the sense that the buyer and seller have a choice as long they do not differ in their wordings. This interpretation, however, so incensed Imām Ibn Abī Dhī‘b that he declared that the Imām (Mālik) was fit for capital punishment. Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal³⁸

37 Imām Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179 AH), a prominent jurist and traditionist and founder of one of the four schools of Sunnī jurisprudence.

38 Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH), celebrated jurist and eminent expert in ḥadīth, and founder of one of the four schools of Sunnī jurisprudence.

reports that when Ibn Abī Dhi'b came to know that Imām Mālik did not abide by the above ḥadīth, he insisted that the Imām should be made to repent or be beheaded. Imām Aḥmad thought Ibn Abī Dhi'b was more God-fearing and truthful than Imām Mālik. Imām al-Dhahabī, nonetheless, remarked: "If he were indeed a God-fearing person, he should not have made such a harsh observation about a distinguished scholar." Imām Mālik did not follow the ḥadīth literally as he regarded it as abrogated. Some scholars, however, maintain that Imām Mālik did follow that ḥadīth in that he ascribed the aforementioned interpretation to it. As for his *ijtihād* on the issue, he will be rewarded for it; and if his viewpoint is proved to be in the right, he will receive a double reward. Only Khārijīs hold that someone who errs in his *ijtihād* should be put to death. The criticism levelled by contemporaries against each other should not be overblown. Ibn Abī Dhi'b's criticism does not lower Imām Mālik's exalted status; nor have scholars condemned Ibn Abī Dhi'b for his attack. They regard both of them as great scholars of Madinah.

The third lecture, at 9.30 am, lasting an hour and a half, is on Imām al-Bukhārī's³⁹ *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*. It is taken by Mawlānā Diyā' al-Ḥasan Nadwī, who is known for his profound knowledge and acuity. He is very well-mannered and tends to asceticism in his way of life. An eminent ḥadīth scholar, with particular expertise in the teaching of Imām al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, he is unusually free of any kind of prejudice or bias and insists on great respect for all scholars. Once he starts lecturing, one envies his earnestness; he is fully engrossed in teaching and does it intently, never veering from the subject.

Before the lecture on Imām al-Bukhārī's ḥadīth collection, we had already had two lectures and covered complex topics. To refresh ourselves, we usually take to reciting poetic verses before the Mawlānā arrives. Our friend, 'Abd al-Ḥasīb, is a poet and knows couplets of other poets by heart. He is of a jolly nature and

39 Imām Muḥammad ibn Ismā'il al-Bukhārī (d. 256 AH), one of the most prominent scholars of ḥadīth, and author of several books in addition to the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, which is revered as the most reliable text after the Qur'an.

enjoys entertaining. He usually recites to us the verses of Dilāwar Figār, the king of humorous poetry, which he knows by heart. If Majāz is popular because of his poem *ay gham-e dil kiyā karūn ay wahashat-e dil kiyā karūn* (O sadness of the heart what should I do, O loneliness of the heart what should I do?), and Faiz's fame is due to *mujh se pahli sī muhabbat mere mahbūb na māng* (O my beloved! Do not ask me for the same love any more), then Dilāwar Figār's name is renowned for his poem *le ke rishwat phans gayā hai de ke rishwat chhūt jā* (you got trapped by taking bribes, so free yourself by giving bribes). 'Abd al-Ḥasīb recites Figār's poem 'hakle kā peyār' in a way that those listening to him for the first time might think that he stammers. We have heard several times from 'Abd al-Ḥasīb Figār's famous poem, "The exam paper of love". Each time we derive the same joy. Even to this day, I can vividly recall many couplets of this funny, light-hearted poem, performed with all of 'Abd al-Ḥasīb's theatrics:

امتحان ہوگا تو پوچھے جائیں گے ایسے سوال
لیلیٰ و مجنوں کے بارے میں کچھ اظہار خیال
عشق ایک سائنس ہے یا آرٹ سمجھا کر لکھو
یا یہ دونوں عشق کا ہیں پارٹ سمجھا کر لکھو
آج اپنے ملک میں عاشق ہیں کتنے فی صدی
منتہی ان میں ہیں کتنے اور کتنے مبتدی
کیا مزہ ملتا ہے دل کو آہ شعلہ بار سے
گرم نالے عرش پر جاتے ہیں کس رفتار سے
چھوٹے چھوٹے نوٹس لکھو ذیل کے ٹاپکس پر
شام غم، شام جدائی، درد دل، درد جگر
مادر لیلیٰ نے تو لیلیٰ نہ بیا ہی قیس کو
تم اگر لیلیٰ کی ماں ہوتے تو کیا کرتے لکھو

وصل کی درخواست پر کس کی سفارش چاہئے
عشق کے پودے کو کتنے انچ بارش چاہئے
انڈیا کا ایک نقشہ اپنی کاپی میں بناؤ
اور پھر اس میں حدود کوچہ جاناں دکھاؤ
ایک عاشق چار دن میں چلتا ہے انیس میل
تین عاشق کتنے دن جائیں گے اڑتیس میل

When an exam is held, the questions will be put as follows:
express some of your thoughts about Laylā and Majnūn.
If love is an art or a science, write it down with explanation;
Or, if both are parts of love, write it down with explanation.

Give the dimensions of an evening of loneliness,
how long is the night of separation, can it be estimated?

Write the name of the equipment used to see
the beloved's beauty.

Name the device that can measure the quantity of beauty.

What percentage of lovers are there in our country?

How many of them attained mastery and how many are novices?

What is the delight conveyed to the heart by the breath
immersed in love?

What is the speed of hot laments ascending to the Throne?

Write short notes on the following:

The evening of grief, the evening of separation, the pain of the heart.

Laylā's mother did not marry Laylā to Majnūn –

What would you have done, had you been Laylā's mother?

Whose recommendation is needed on the application of joining?

How many inches of rain are needed for the plant of love to grow?

Draw a map of India on your paper, then draw on it:
the boundaries of the street of the beloved.

One lover walks nineteen miles in four days –
three lovers will walk thirty-eight miles in how many days?

Today, however, 'Abd al-Ḥasīb was away in Sitapur, and we all missed him. Šābir Pūrnavī and 'Umar Laddākhī were taking

full advantage of his absence. The former enjoys a reputation as a conscientious student, usually reciting the text of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in class. He raised an important question, asking why Imām al-Bukhārī had included reports by Shu‘ayb ibn Abī Ḥamzah on the authority of Abū al-Yamān. His point was that the Imām’s conditions for including a report are very stringent and his standards for pronouncing a ḥadīth to be *ṣaḥīḥ* are very high. Abū al-Yamān did not hear Shu‘ayb’s books directly from him, nor did he read them with him. At most, Abū al-Yamān had a general *ijāzah* (permission) from Shu‘ayb to narrate his hadith without his necessarily having heard them from him. According to Abū Zur‘ah al-Rāzī,⁴⁰ Abū al-Yamān had heard only one ḥadīth directly from Shu‘ayb. Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal explicitly states that Abū al-Yamān’s narrations from Ṣafwān ibn ‘Amr and Ḥarīz are all sound – the implication being that he questions his reports from Shu‘ayb.

Responding to Ṣābir’s question, Āftāb pointed out that Imām Aḥmad had directly asked Abū al-Yamān the same question, who answered to the effect that he, Abū al-Yamān, had heard some books from Shu‘ayb and read some with him, and the rest he narrates on the authority of *ijāzah* and *munāwalah*. Therefore, it is incorrect to hold that Abū al-Yamān did not receive any knowledge from Shu‘ayb by directly hearing it or reading it out aloud to him. Furthermore, Abū al-Yamān is cautious in reporting; he uses the phrase *‘akhbaranā* – he informed us’ for all the ḥadīth that he narrates from him, because this term is used for hearing the Shaykh’s ḥadīth read out to him, rather than the phrase *‘haddathanā* – he narrated to us’, which is used for when the Shaykh himself narrated the ḥadīth. ‘Umar supported Āftāb’s stance, pointing out that what Abū al-Yamān acquired by *munāwalah* from Shu‘ayb, he had not narrated at all. Mufaḍḍal ibn Ghassān al-Ghallābī states on the authority of Imām Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn: “I asked Abū al-Yamān regarding the ḥadīth of Shu‘ayb ibn Abī Ḥamzah. He told me that they did not belong to the category of *munāwalah*. Rather, he had not narrated any of the reports he had received by *munāwalah*.”

⁴⁰ Imām Abū Zur‘ah ‘Ubaydullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Rāzī (d. 264 A.H.), an eminent scholar of ḥadīth and the science of ḥadīth criticism.

It is thus clear that Abū al-Yamān had not received ḥadīth from Shu‘ayb by *munāwalah* or *ijāzah* alone. Rather, he had taken most ḥadīth from Shu‘ayb by hearing them directly or reading them out to him. What he had received as *munāwalah* he had not narrated. Therefore, Imām Bukhārī cannot be faulted for citing reports narrated by Abū al-Yamān from Shu‘ayb.

Ṣābir did not appear convinced by this clarification. He elaborated his point: “Shu‘ayb’s son reports that some people called on his father seeking his *ijāzah* for his ḥadīths, but he refused to oblige them. After some time, they asked him again; on that occasion Abū al-Yamān was also present. This time Shu‘ayb did grant *ijāzah*. At a later date Abū al-Yamān took Shu‘ayb’s books and started narrating his reports.” Āftāb clarified: “The above account does not discredit Abū al-Yamān. He learnt and heard ḥadīths from Shu‘ayb at some other time. Shu‘ayb’s son, however, had the misconception that Abū al-Yamān reported ḥadīths based only on the general *ijāzah* granted by Shu‘ayb.”

I added that even if it is assumed that Abū al-Yamān had not heard those ḥadīths from Shu‘ayb, it does not reflect poorly on Imām al-Bukhārī because Abū al-Yamān had an *ijāzah* from him, which is an approved method of receiving ḥadīth. Abū al-Yamān is a reliable narrator, and what he has narrated on the authority of Shu‘ayb are undoubtedly Shu‘ayb’s ḥadīths. Abū al-Yamān was among the teachers of Imām Bukhārī. The latter must have clarified this point well with the former. More importantly, no expert of ḥadīth has raised any objection to any of Abū al-Yamān’s ḥadīths that al-Bukhārī has included in his book. Only one report by Abū al-Yamān is contested. This report is ascribed to Umm Ḥabībah, who narrates from the Prophet, peace be upon him, saying:

أريت ما تلقى أمتي من بعدي، وسفك بعضهم دماء بعض، وكان ذلك
سابقاً من الله فسألته أن يوليني شفاعة فيهم ففعل

“I was shown what my nation will face after me, and how they will shed each other’s blood. That is destined by God. So I asked Him to grant me intercession on their behalf, and He accepted that.”

Some of Abū al-Yamān's students have narrated this report from Shu'ayb from Ibn Abī Ḥusayn from Anas and some from Shu'ayb from al-Zuhri from Anas. According to Yaḥyā ibn Ma'īn, when he asked Abū al-Yamān about it, he ascribed it to al-Zuhri, adding that those who have narrated it from him as a ḥadīth of al-Zuhri are right, while those who narrated it from him as a ḥadīth of Ibn Abī Ḥusayn are wrong: "I had this ḥadīth in my notes along with the ḥadīths of Ibn Abī Ḥusayn; by mistake, I turned the page and narrated it as a ḥadīth of Ibn Abī Ḥusayn. This is actually a ḥadīth of al-Zuhri." Obviously, this is not a big mistake. Now consider Imām al-Bukhārī's meticulousness; he has not included this report in his collection. He is thus fully faithful to and observant of the standards and conditions that he had laid down.

While al-Bukhārī's approach was under discussion, Mawlānā Diyā' al-Ḥasan arrived. He greeted us with *salām* "peace" – he dislikes it if we students greet him with *salām* first. For him, the *sunnah* is that the visitor greets those seated. Since we were sitting in the classroom, he felt it more appropriate that he say *salām* to us on entering. For the last two or three days, his lecture had been on the chapter on the *adhān* in the section on the Friday prayer. The relevant ḥadīth is cited by the Imām on Sā'ib ibn Yazīd's authority: "In the days of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar, the first *adhān* was made when the Imām took the pulpit. By the time Caliph 'Uthmān took over, the population of Madinah had increased considerably. At the place of al-Zawra', the third *adhān* for the Friday prayer was introduced."

The Mawlānā explained the above ḥadīth in the light of the comments made by ḥadīth and *fiqh* scholars, which may be summarised in this way: in the days of the Prophet, peace be upon him, a single *adhān* was made for the Friday sermon. The Qur'ānic command to hasten to the Friday prayer was identified with this *adhān*. During 'Uthmān's reign, the first *adhān* was introduced and since then both *adhāns* have been in practice. In the above ḥadīth this is called the third *adhān*, which implies that, prior to 'Uthmān's day, two *adhāns* were made. The answer given to this question is that since the *iqāmah* is also a sort of *adhān*, one may hold that

there are three *adhāns* for the Friday Prayer. It is supported by another report contained in al-Bukhārī's collection, where the *adhān* added in the time of 'Uthmān is called the second *adhān*. It raises the question as to why it was known as the third *adhān*; it should have been called the first *adhān*. The answer generally given to this question is that since it was introduced at a later date, this is how it came to be known as the second *adhān*.

Some students were not satisfied with the above clarification. The discussion had been going on for days. We had come across Mawlānā Shahbāz's interpretation, which we presented to Mawlānā Diyā' al-Ḥasan. According to Mawlānā Shahbāz, two *adhāns* for Friday prayer was the practice during the Prophet's day. The first one corresponded with the Qur'ānic command. Caliph 'Uthmān had introduced the third one to meet a pressing need. It was not a permanent feature. The population of Madinah was increasing and hence this *adhān* was made at another locality, namely al-Zawrā' in Madinah. The Mawlānā substantiated his stance with several arguments, whose summary is as follows:

The relevant Qur'ānic command runs thus: 'When the call to prayer on Friday is proclaimed, hasten to the remembrance of God, and leave business' (al-Jumu'ah, 62:9). The remembrance of God means both the Friday prayer and sermon. For the majority of scholars, it refers to the sermon alone. If people were to head for the mosque when the *adhān* for the sermon is called, those living on the outskirts of Madinah would have been likely to miss part of the sermon and perhaps also part of the prayer. Hence, the Qur'ānic directive should be interpreted as the *adhān* that was made a little before the time for prayer so that people may get ready for the mosque, enabling them to join the congregation for both sermon and prayer. This is only possible if the command of the Qur'ān is understood as referring to the first *adhān*. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah accordingly interprets the Qur'ānic command in the sense of the first *adhān*.

There is a distinction between the *adhān* and the *iqāmah*. The latter is done to announce the commencement of prayer when the congregation is ready. The former notifies us that it is time for prayer. It urges people to wind up their business and prepare to join

the prayer. The shari'ah has a rationale behind every ruling – how can it prescribe the *adhān* for all other prayers, to alert people that it is time for prayer, and not have an *adhān* for Friday prayer, the most important of the congregational prayers?

Given that the *adhān* alerts people about the time of the prayer, and the *iqāmah* about the commencement of the prayer, what is the reason for having an *adhān* before the Friday sermon? As the sermon is delivered straight after that *adhān*, it cannot be announcing the prayer time. Rather, it tells people to conclude their *sunnah* and *nafl* prayers and turn their attention to the sermon. The *adhān* just before the sermon serves the same purpose that the *iqāmah* serves for the commencement of the congregational prayer.

The *adhān* for the sermon is called in front of the imām. Its purpose is, as mentioned earlier, to alert people already inside the mosque. What is the relevance of the increase or decrease in the population of Madinah to this *adhān*? The ḥadīth that mentions the *adhān* added by Caliph 'Uthmān is clear evidence that he did not introduce a new *adhān* because the *adhān* of the sermon was insufficient. Rather, he had provisionally introduced the second *adhān*, as the first *adhān* was insufficient for the growing population.

The Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and other collections of ḥadīths name 'Uthmān's additional *adhān* "the third *adhān*," which is an indication that two *adhāns* were already in use. Some reports name it the second one, because the Friday prayer already had an additional *adhān*, and this was a second addition.

Mawlānā Ḍiyā' al-Ḥasan was not persuaded by this interpretation, although, looking at both sides of the argument, he conceded that it was plausible. It was now time for the next lecture. We moved out of the Dār al-ḥadīth and reached our classroom in the Dār al-'Ulūm.

The fourth lecture, at 11 am, on *al-Mu'allaqāt*,⁴¹ is to be delivered by Mawlānā Sayyid Muḥammad Rābi' Ḥasanī Nadwī, an accomplished scholar of excellent conduct and a master of

41 *Mu'allaqāt*, lit. 'hung poems', refers to pre-Islamic Arabic verses or verse collections written in gold letters and hung on the walls of the Ka'bah in Makkah during annual fairs. They consist of seven (in some versions ten) odes, by different poets of the 6th century. They are generally regarded as the finest Arabic odes and present a lively picture of Bedouin life before Islam.

his field. He seems to have a comprehensive command of Arabic language, and is well grounded in the Arabic literary tradition. His competence as a lexicographer is arguably greater than Jawharī's. His knowledge of geography gives the impression of someone who has memorised the whole of *Mu'jam al-buldān*. In addition, he is familiar with the principles of education. Though the foundation of the movement for Islamic literature was not yet laid down, his mind was occupied with it. In the annals of Islamic literature he is bound to have a prominent place. Notwithstanding his high reputation, he displays the utmost simplicity and modesty.

ما شئتَ قل فيه فأنتَ مصدق
والفضل يقضي والحاسن تشهد

Say about him whatever you like, and you will be counted truthful.
The verdict of virtue and the testimony of beauty support you.

As administrative duties sometimes preoccupy him, he comes a little late to the class. On this occasion we turned, once again, to Ja'far, asking him to conclude his assessment of Josh's *Yadon kī bārāt*. Ja'far resumed his analysis, stating that Josh suffers from the delusion that poetry is revealed to him. It is a claim similar to Ghālib's:

مانودیم بدیں مرتبہ راضی غالب
شعر خود خواہش آں کرد کہ گردون ما

We were not content with this status, O Ghālib.
Poetry itself desired to become our art.

Josh dismisses contemporary men of letters with contempt, not giving them any status above crows. I pointed out that arrogance and pride are common to many poets. Ghālib⁴² did not acknowledge the literary worth of anyone else. Even some scholars betray this

42 Mirzā Asadullāh Khān "Ghālib" (1796-1869) is one of the best Urdu poets. He led a revolution in Urdu poetry. According to the critic Āl Aḥmad Surūr, "Ghālib gave intellect to our poetry which was till then dominated by the people of heart." Not only Urdu poetry but prose is also indebted to Mirzā Ghālib. His letters laid the foundation for a fluent, popular Urdu. Before Ghālib, letter writing in Urdu was highly ornate. He made his letters very effective vehicles for communication by using the language in the idiom of a speaker. To Urdu *ghazals*, along with love and beauty, Ghālib introduced other facets of life, thus greatly extending their canvas.

failing. For example, Mawlānā ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Khayrābādī claimed that in the whole history of Islam in India there had been only two and a half scholars: one, Mullā ‘Abd al-‘Alī Baḥr al-‘Ulūm, the second, his father, and the half, himself.

Ja‘far turned his attention to Josh’s claim about the Urdu language. From childhood he had had the mistaken conviction that the language was his private domain, and he might use it as he wished. He did not adhere to any norm in the use of words. As he was a lover by birth and a drinker by birth, in the same way he was free by birth not bound by any code in the matter of language and expression.

Āftāb added: “Notwithstanding all his errors, some of his hymns in praise of God and the Prophet, peace be upon him, are excellent.” ‘Umar said that Āftāb, being generous himself, makes allowance for everyone, and cannot fault Josh even in the face of the outrageous sins he committed. Šābir, however, defended Āftāb, saying that his positive approach should be appreciated. The following couplet is true about him:

در خرابات جہاں نور خدا می پیئم
وین عجب ہیں کہ چہ نورے زکجا می پیئم

In the wine house, I see the light of God
and look at this wonder, which light do I see from where?

Take the example of Sartre, a leading star of existentialist philosophy,⁴³ who said: “I am pushed constantly into the dark cave of blindness. However, my mind, at the end of all this effort and hardship, is focused on the imminent light which is my destiny.” Would Josh be denied that light? Šābir asked Āftāb to recite some of the devotional poems and hymns composed by Josh. Āftāb, complying, recited in

43 At that time, Existentialist philosophy and Sartre were buzzwords at Nadwah. Many writers of our time have been influenced by Sartre. Renowned as a leading philosopher, literary figure and social critic, French writer Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was the most prominent representative of Existentialism, a philosophical approach that emphasises the ultimacy of human freedom and individual responsibility. In his later writings, however, Sartre attempted to combine the individualism of his existentialist work with a form of Marxism, which stresses collective aspects of human existence.

his melodious voice a moving poem by Josh, which celebrates the praise of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

اے کہ ترے جلال سے اہل گئی بزم کافری
رعشہ خوف بن گیا رقص بتاں آذری
خشک عرب کے ریگ سے لہر ابھی نیاز کی
قلم ناز حسن میں اف رے تری شادری
چھین لیں تو نے مجلس شرک و خودی سے گرمیاں
ڈال دی تو نے پیکر لات و اہل میں تھر تھری
تیرے قدم پہ جہہ سا روم و عجم کی نختیں
تیرے حضور سجدہ ریز چین و عرب کی خود سری
تیرے سخن سے دب گئے لاف و گزاف کفر کے
تیرے نفس سے بجھ گئی آتش سحر سامری
چشمہ ترے بیان کا غار حرا کی خامشی
نغمہ ترے سکوت کا نعرہ فتح خیربری
تیرے فقیر اور دیں کوچہ کفر میں صدا
تیرے غلام اور کریں اہل جفا کی چاکری
تیری پیہری کی یہ سب سے بڑی دلیل ہے
بششا گدائے راہ کو تو نے شکوہ قیصری

The poem pays a glowing tribute to the Prophet, peace be upon him, for striking a deadly blow at unbelief, for his denunciation of idolatry and for bringing about a remarkable revolution in Arabia. He abolished polytheism there and demolished the idols that had been worshipped for centuries. He civilised the Arabs and put an end to unbelief. His message tore falsehood to shreds. His truth empowered the poor and conferred dignity upon them.

While Āftāb was still reciting, the Mawlānā arrived. His lecture a few days ago was on a *mu'allaqah* by Imru' al-Qays, known as 'the misguided king'. Now he had moved on to another major Arab poet of that period, Ṭarafah ibn 'Abd, the striking features of his poetry and his status among other poets of the *jāhiliyyah* period. His lectures are typically wide ranging, and provide sufficient depth of background to enable students to understand the subject properly. The Mawlānā began with biographical notes on the man: Ṭarafah ibn 'Abd ibn Sufyān ibn Mālik al-Bakrī of the tribe of Bakr ibn Wā'il was born in Bahrayn in 543 CE, and Bahrayn was linked to the vast desert region of Najd in central Arabia. A large number of poets hail from this region, which contributed much to the spread of the *ghazal* form in Arabia. Najd is the birthplace of other leading poets of the *jāhiliyyah* period – Imru' al-Qays, al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥillizah, Aws ibn Ḥujr, Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā and 'Antara ibn Shaddād. Ṭarafah was the nephew of the distinguished Arab poets al-Mutalammis and al-Muraqqash, and perhaps inherited poetic talent from them. He came from a noble family and was uninhibited in his criticism of his own people and others in his poetry. Little is on record about his biography. Nevertheless, it is certain that he was a centrally important man who took great pride in his social milieu. He maintained a distance from commoners and courted the favour of rulers, writing satires for some of them against others. With his uncle al-Mutalammis he went to the court of the king of Ḥīrah, 'Amr ibn Hind (d. 568/9), and there became companion to the king's brother. Because he ridiculed the king in some verses, he was sent with a letter to the Persian governor of the southern shores of the Gulf. But Ṭarafah and his uncle managed to escape. Ṭarafah died in 569, not yet thirty. There is much divergence of opinion on the rank held by Ṭarafah among the composers of *Mu'allaqāt*. Some place him next only to Imru' al-Qays, but the rank of Imru' al-Qays itself is disputed. It is hard to arrive at a consensus on this point. On being asked to rank the poets, Labīd named Imru' al-Qays the best, then Ṭarafah, and then himself.

Since Ṭarafah died young, his poetic corpus is meagre. There are many striking points in his *mu'allaqah*, which will be explained

in their due place. He glorifies she-camels in an unprecedented manner. He is not an expert on the praise of horses. Parables and maxims are interspersed in his poems, which enhance the quality of his work. He is good at satire but poor at panegyric. His use of figurative language, though on a limited scale, is very appealing. Some of his couplets gained wide currency.

ولولا ثلاث هن من عيشة الفتى وجدك لم أحفل متى قام عودي

Were it not for three things which are part of a young man's life,
by your luck I would not give a damn to know the hour of my death.

Among his well-known verses is:

سبدي لك الأيام ما كنت جاهلا
ويأتيك بالأخبار من لم تزود

Soon time will reveal to you what you were ignorant of.
Moreover, the news will come to you by one whom
you paid nothing.

The Mawlānā took up the opening couplet of his *mu'allaqah*:

لخولة أطلال بريقة تهمد
تلوح كباقي الوشم في ظاهر اليد

Khawla has ruins in the hillocks of Thahmad,
which appear like the remains of a tattoo on
the back of the hand.

He explained its key words and allusions. For example: Khawla is the name of a woman belonging to the Banū Kalb tribe; *aṭlāl*, a plural of *ṭalal*, refers to ruins; *barqah* means a hillock of rocks and clay and Thahmad is a place in Najd. Including Thahmad, there are about a hundred places known for having *barqah*; *talūhu* means to appear and to be seen; the same word, in the fourth form of the verb when it comes from *bāb if'āl*, means to shine; *washm* means a tattoo. Apart from elucidating its diction, the Mawlānā drew our attention also to its grammatical and rhetorical features.

After this linguistic and grammatical explanation, the Mawlānā translated the verse: 'Khawlah's ruined and abandoned camp site on the schist slopes of Thahmad mountain is like an old tattoo's fading glow on the back of the hand.' Sometimes the ruins of houses are also likened to lines on paper. His explanation of the couplet was extensive. A pointed reference was made to the role and importance of houses, tents and ruins in the Bedouin way of life. Ruins, in particular, evoke nostalgia.

Āftāb asked why the *mu'allaqāt* of both Imru' al-Qays and Ṭarafah commence with an account of ruins. Why do they have the same opening? In reply, the Mawlānā said that this was a familiar objection, not only to *mu'allaqāt*, but to all the poetry of that time. A poet says

هل غادر الشعراء من متردم
أم هل عرفت الدار بعد توهم

Have the poets forsaken the ruins
or do you know home only after imagining it?

Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulma says:

ما أرانا نقول إلا معارا
أو معادا من لفظنا مكرورا

Time and again in our speaking we see only borrowing
and repetition in our words.

It is not right, however, to hold that all the poetry of the *jāhili* period is marked by sameness and repetition. For example, 'Amr ibn Kulthūm's *mu'allaqah* opens on a different note, namely a description of wine. Even those poets who open with the mention of ruins and abandoned camps treat the subject from a variety of angles. Imru' al-Qays delves deeply into it while Ṭarafah only alludes to it in passing. The latter focusses more on the Bedouin way of life. Poetical works of a given period have much in common, but express it through different styles. Even the poetry of progressive poets in our times has a narrow worldview. These poets differ only in their details, priorities and style.

Mawlānā Rābi's lecture concluded at 11.45 am. The next session of forty-five minutes is on dissertation writing.⁴⁴ I now have to go to the faculty of Sharī'ah and the Shibli library, then to the office of *al-Rā'id* to discuss the translation of an article into Arabic.

At the Sharī'ah faculty I met Tāriq, who is in charge of the faculty library. He is also a *fiqh* scholar and regularly writes the *fiqh* column with the title '*suwāl-o jawāb*' (question and answer) in *Ta'mīr-i Hayāt*. He is a close friend, gifted with a jovial personality. I also met there Mawlānā Salmān and discussed with him some reference work and source books for the essay competition organised by the Sharī'ah faculty on the theme "How the Companions received ḥadīth from the Messenger of God, peace be upon him". Mawlānā Salmān had recently graduated from Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University. His induction had enlivened the academic activities at the faculty; he set up an independent faculty library and organised academic contests for students, prompting them to pursue research.

As I passed by the staff room, I met Mawlānā Nāṣir and Mawlānā 'Ārif, who were talking to each other. The former is a leading scholar, famed for his command of ḥadīth and *fiqh*. He is uniquely insightful on the principles and norms of *fiqh*. His lectures inspire students to pursue their studies more deeply. He is an excellent teacher when it comes to comparing Islamic law with man-made law. He is also thoroughly conversant with *Uṣūl al-sarakhsī*, *Kashf al-bazdawī*, al-Ghazālī's *Mustaṣfā* and Shawkānī's *Irshād al-fuḥūl*. Mawlānā 'Ārif teaches *tafsīr*. His elucidation of monotheism is remarkable, while his association with Mawlānā Manzūr Nu'mānī had alerted him fully to the dangers posed by those sects that prefer innovation in the religion over the sunnah. After greeting these teachers, I reached the library.

Inside the library I found many teachers and students either engaged in study or searching for relevant books. The librarian,

⁴⁴ As already stated, Nadwah students have to submit a dissertation in the final year of *faḍīlah* on a topic of their special study. Since many books must be consulted before writing it, a period in the daily timetable is allocated to library time. Generally, students visit the Shibli Library for this purpose. My dissertation topic was Imām al-Bukhārī and *tafsīr*.

Mawlānā Murtaḍā shared with me the good news that Sa'īd⁴⁵ had sent to Nadwah library *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'* and *al-Dibāj al-mudhahhab*. This pleased me greatly, for I needed these works. On coming back from the library I met Mawlānā Hārūn Nadwī, who is in charge of the Manuscripts section. He is a very urbane, friendly and agreeable person, willing to give researchers every possible assistance.

I saw Mawlānā Sayyid 'Abdullāh Ḥasanī at the al-Rā'id office. He comes from an illustrious family and stands out above others for his nobility, generosity, devotion to Islam and commitment to the cause of promoting the *Sunnah*. He is very attached to *taṣawwuf* yet adheres to Sharī'ah norms in this pursuit. His interest does not therefore amount to transgression. His *taṣawwuf* is under the command of his knowledge and his knowledge is subservient to his *taṣawwuf*. He follows the famous saying:⁴⁶

مشرب پیر حجت نمی شود، دلیل از کتاب و سنت می باید

The way of the shaykh is not a proof; evidence must be provided from Qur'ān and Sunnah.

I often have discussions with him and am never satiated. Since he was on his way to teach his class, I could not detain him for long. I saw Mawlānā Wāḍiḥ at his office; Mawlānā 'Abd al-Nūr was also there. The latter graduated from Jāmi' al-Azhar. We studied psychology and aesthetics with him. He is an authority on rhetoric and current trends in Urdu and Arabic literary criticism. He has an eye for poetic excellence. At that time both of them were discussing the works of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, in particular Anwar al-Jundī's latest works on Ḥusayn. Mawlānā Wāḍiḥ is critical of al-Jundī's attacks on Ḥusayn's personal life.

Since the time for the next lecture was approaching I went to the canteen, where I saw Ishāq Ḥusaynī discussing critically,

45 Sa'īd Murtaḍā, a graduate of Jāmi'ah al-Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd al-Islāmiyyah, a brilliant scholar, and one with excellent manners. He has contributed much to the development of the Shibli library, procuring a large number of valuable books for Nadwah library.

46 Attributed to Shaykh Nasīr al-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī (d. 1356).

and in a scholarly and thoughtful manner, Sayyid Quṭb Shahīd's marvellous work, *al-Taṣwīr al-fannī fī al-Qur'ān*. Those present were listening to him in rapt attention. Ishāq is my classmate, and a descendant of an illustrious family. He is a sober person of refined taste. I had tea and listened to his comments. As it was time for the next lecture, Ishāq could not conclude his commentary. On the way to the classroom I said to Ishāq: "At the behest of Mawlānā Wāḍiḥ I have read Sayyid Quṭb's *al-Taṣwīr al-fannī* and *Mashāhid al-qiṣāmah*. Mawlānā Wāḍiḥ is deeply impressed by Sayyid Quṭb's treatment of his subject matter. I have listened to your review of Quṭb's work, which deals with features of his style and his flair for depicting the Qur'ānic presentation of things. Few can match you in offering such an effective summary of Quṭb's work, yet I doubt whether you have read Quṭb's book in full." To this Ishāq replied: "Is there a single reviewer who reads the whole book for his review? It is standard practice to skim and scan. I am not to be criticised for following the standard practice." I was nonetheless amazed at how Ishāq managed to review the book so well, even though he had not read it all.

The next lecture, at 12:30 pm, is on the history of Islamic sciences by Mawlānā Abū al-'Irfān Nadwī, a disciple of the leading Islamic historian of India, Sayyid Sulaymān Nadwī. Mawlānā Abū al-'Irfān is the Urdu translator of a significant work on history, Mawlānā Sayyid 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥasanī's *al-Thaqāfah al-islāmiyyah fī al-Hind*. Mawlānā Abū al-'Irfān is a specialist in philosophy, history and metaphysics. He knows numerous Urdu, Arabic and Persian couplets by heart and uses them most aptly. He has an acute grasp of both traditional and rational disciplines and is a competent teacher and scholar, remarkable for his observation and wide range of study. When he walks one can see his *izārband* (belt) hanging down. The intention is not to show off his *izārband*; it is just that he is not very particular about his dress.

His lectures have so far been on the history of grammar, ḥadīth and *fiqh* and their different phases. His lectures on *tafsīr*, logic and philosophy, especially their historical development, are due later. Since the previous week he has been lecturing on the history of

tafsīr and Qur'ānic studies. His discussion embraces *tafsīr* works that are reflective of independent thinking. Today, he focused on the status of al-Zamakhsharī⁴⁷ in the field of *tafsīr*. According to the Mawlānā, al-Zamakhsharī had a multi-faceted personality in that he was a competent lexicographer, grammarian, rhetorician and was well-grounded in literary sensibility and the *i'tizālī* school of theology. All these aspects of his genius are reflected in his Qur'ān commentary. Like other proponents of his school, he was not a competent scholar of ḥadīth, though he had secured an *ijāzah* in ḥadīth from some leading authorities like Nasr ibn al-Baṭir. Some latter-day scholars like Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ṭāhir al-Silāfi and Zaynab bint al-Shi'rā have cited ḥadīth on his authority. Yet disregard for ḥadīth is a major defect in his work. He is also guilty of citing some weak or even fabricated reports in his account of the excellence of certain Qur'ānic *sūrahs*.

I'tizāl is another major flaw in his work. His *tafsīr* is marred by his constant defence of the opinions of *Ahl al-ʿadl wa al-tawḥīd* (i.e. Mu'tazilites) and his strong attacks on the orthodox Muslim viewpoint. Imām Ibn Taymiyyah points to this flaw and cautions readers against it, and highlights this weakness in his work.

Nonetheless, the outstanding feature of al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr al-Kashshāf* is its account of the literary and idiomatic features of Qur'ānic language. He excels others in bringing out the inimitability of the word of God and other elements of the Qur'ān. That is why, notwithstanding his confession of adherence to the Mu'tazilī doctrine, his work has gained currency among mainstream Muslims.

Raḍī al-Islām raised the question whether al-Bayḍāwī's *Tafsīr* does not contain the same qualities. Al-Bayḍāwī's work has the additional merit of refuting *i'tizāl* and proving the Ash'arī viewpoint. The Mawlānā answered that, following the publication of al-Zamakhsharī's highly popular *al-Kashshāf*, the 'ulamā' had been planning a work to replace it. Al-Bayḍāwī's work is such an attempt,

47 Abū al-Qāsim Jārullāh Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1143) was a Mu'tazilite theologian, grammarian and man of letters. He is best known for his commentary on the Qur'ān.

yet it is markedly different from *al-Kashshāf*. The latter excels in its masterly coverage of the literary and idiomatic aspects of the Qur'ān and its affecting presentation. These qualities are lacking in al-Bayḏāwī, whose command of Arabic is not perfect. His obsession with philosophy has rendered his work less charming. He is, no doubt, a representative of Muslim orthodoxy, and has advantage over al-Zamakhsarī, but his work has never equalled *al-Kashshāf* in popularity.

The Mawlānā then presented a survey of the impact of *al-Kashshāf* at various stages of Islamic history and in different parts of the Muslim world. Ibn Taymiyyah's criticism of al-Zamakhsarī is very strong, yet he too appears to fall under the latter's influence in his writings on the Qur'ān. In the Indian subcontinent *al-Kashshāf* has enjoyed great popularity. Shaykh Nāẓm al-Dīn Awliyā' had read it, and it was prescribed for study in his seminary. Shaykh al-Islām Farīd al-Dīn Awadhī used to teach it. Among his students were Shaykh Nasīr al-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī and Mawlānā Shams al-Dīn Awadhī. On studying Qaḏī Shihāb al-Dīn Daulatābādī's *al-Baḥr al-mawwāj*, 'Allāmah Mahā'imī's *tafsīr* and Qaḏī Thanā'ullāh Pānīpatī's *al-Tafsīr al-maẓharī*, its influence on these comes to light. The Mawlānā recited al-Zamakhsarī's couplet in which he affirms his erudition.

ومذ أفلح الجهال أيقنت أنني
أنا الميم والأيام أفلح أعلم

Since ignorant people have gained success in this world,
I am certain that I am the *mīm* and people are *aflaḥ* and *a'lam*.

In the first stanza the word *aflaḥa* means "gained success". The Mawlānā explained that the word *aflaḥu* in the second stanza means having a fissure in the upper lip, whereas *a'lam* refers to having a fissure in the lower lip. Such a person is unable to pronounce *mīm*. These two words can also mean 'more successful' and 'more knowledgeable', though not in this context.

At 1.15 pm the lecture ended and the adhān for *zuhr* prayer was called. The congregation was at 1.30 pm. We hurried to our hostel,

and after doing *wuḍū'* went to the mosque. As usual, Mawlānā Sa'īd al-Raḥmān led the prayer.

We normally get bread and lentils at lunch, which we enjoy, as we are hungry. Today, 'Abd al-Ḥayy has invited us to lunch. I arrived in the company of Āftāb at 'Abd al-Ḥayy's room, and we found other friends – Ṭāriq, Raḍī al-Islām and 'Abd al-Mubīn Gondawī – already there. 'Abd al-Mubīn told us that he was Mawlānā Salmān Ḥusaynī's classmate in *ḥifẓ* class. He was admitted to the 'ālimiyyah course last year. He has been repeating the course in order to improve himself.

There was a dish of *kofte* for lunch; 'Abd al-Ḥayy had prepared plenty of it. They were delicious and large in size. We enjoyed both the food and the witty exchanges between 'Abd al-Ḥayy and 'Abd al-Mubīn. 'Abd al-Mubīn told us that in the half-yearly examination he got sixty marks out of a hundred in the *tafsīr* paper. 'Abd al-Ḥayy interrupted, saying: "Do not tell us the total marks of all three exams (quarterly, half yearly and yearly exams) combined." 'Abd al-Mubīn related that while he was studying in a madrasah in Mau, while explaining the issue of raising hands during prayer, as is recorded by al-Bukhārī, the teacher forcefully dismissed the Ḥanafī stance on the issue, saying that seventy Companions had narrated it. At that point, the rest of the class looked at him, and he simply asked what the total number of Companions was.

Raḍī al-Islām told us that he was currently engaged in refuting Mawlānā Farāhī's interpretation of Sūrat al-Fil. He has collected sufficient material to write on this subject. 'Abd al-Ḥayy was surprised that, despite his erudition and piety, Mawlānā Farāhī had deviated from orthodoxy on this issue. Ṭāriq pointed out that Mawlānā Farāhī was, after all, a human being, liable to error. While trying to exonerate the Mawlānā, Āftāb said that it was a complex issue. His detractors had exploited it in order to discredit him. The Mawlānā was thoroughly grounded in the Arabic poetry of the *jāhiliyyah* period, and Arab poets took great pride in this incident of the defeat of Abrahah and his army. They held that birds had gathered to feast on the human corpses. Raḍī al-Islām objected to this, saying that on the one hand, the Mawlānā is very cautious in his

use of ḥadīths, and yet he neglects the authentic ḥadīths reporting this incident. On the other hand, he feels no qualms in employing Arab poetry of the *jāhiliyyah* period, though its authenticity is more doubtful than that of even weak ḥadīths. There are reports that some couplets were fabricated at a later date by Ḥammād al-Rāwiyah and Khalf al-Aḥmar. The Arabs' sense of pride should be properly understood. The Arab poets' assertion of inflicting defeat upon Abrahah does not necessarily signify their doing so in a war. In boasting of their victory they allude to divine help.

While this discussion was going on, 'Abd al-Mubīn took to raising objections against Ṭāriq's *fatwā* writing. During his visit to Aurangabad someone had spoken highly of Ṭāriq's regular column in *Ta'mīr-i ḥayāt* in which he gives *fatwās*, and suggested that these *fatwās* be published in a book form. He, however, pointed out that these *fatwās* already existed in books. 'Abd al-Ḥayy said to Ṭāriq: "Your style and idiom in writing *fatwās* is not in accordance with the stance of Nadwah. Some of the terms and expressions you use would hurt Shiblī, Mawlānā Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān Sherwānī and other literary figures among the founders of Nadwah. Look at scholars of Egypt like Muftī Muḥammad 'Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, how they have developed a way of writing *fatwās* using simple language." I too suggested that Ṭāriq would benefit from them, not only in the language of *fatwā* writing, but also in the methodology of the exercise. In the past, it was customary to use as few words in a *fatwā* as possible. But this is not the right way. Rather, arguments drawn from the Qur'ān, *sunnah* and common sense should be presented in order to convince those seeking a ruling, as it will increase their knowledge. Look at the Qur'ān: how many considerations it covers when answering the questions! Ḥadīth literature abounds in such instances. A curt reply is of little use. Similarly, the relevant ḥadīth should be quoted in full, specifying the chapter and section of the source book. If it is not in a standard collection like *Muwattā* or the sound books of Imāms al-Bukhārī and Muslim, then the authority on which it is cited should be stated, along with some comment on the authenticity of the ḥadīth.

It was around 2.30 pm when we finished our lunch. Since we

had to have our afternoon siesta, we dispersed and returned to the hostel.

I woke up at 4.30 pm, had a bath and went along with Āftāb to the mosque for the *‘aṣr* prayer at 5 pm. I told Āftāb not to wait for me after prayer, as I had to go to the Rā’id and Islāḥ libraries, and that I would join them afterwards for some sport. Mawlānā Sa‘īd al-Raḥmān, as usual, led the prayer. After the *‘aṣr* prayer there was a five- to ten-minute-long reading from a book, usually Mawlānā Ṣadr Yār Jang Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān Khān Sherwānī’s *‘Ulmā-i salaf*, as it infuses in the audience a quest for knowledge, commitment to scholarship, and a desire to stand in prayer at night. Occasionally Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Manerī’s *Maktūbāt* is also read out. Today, Mawlānā Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwī’s *Tazkiyah wa-iḥsān* was being studied. Khālīd read aloud the following extract from it:

“In normal circumstances, there are leaders to steer the community and military generals to conduct wars. An extraordinary personality is not needed in ordinary conditions. In a crisis, however, only those who are extremely devoted to God and have firm conviction and spiritual strength can lead. In Muslim history there were dark moments when a change for the better seemed remote. However, an illustrious personality would appear on the scene who, by dint of his fervour, transformed the situation. It was a scene of revival and resurgence. At one time the Mongols dealt a severe blow to the Muslim world. The Muslim empires of the ‘Abbāsids and Khwārizm Shāhs were swept away. As a result there was despair everywhere. The Mongols seemed invincible. A proverb gained popularity at the time: a report of a Mongol defeat should never be trusted. Yet there were some devout persons of the day who went ahead with their mission. Finally the Mongols embraced Islam and served as defenders of the Islamic faith.

“During Akbar’s reign, Muslim India was steeped in error and atheism. This is because Akbar, one of the most powerful emperors of his age with immense resources at his disposal, sought to distort Islam, stripping it of all its distinctive features. He was assisted in his wretched designs by the most intelligent people of the day. His empire showed no apparent sign of decay and decline. Nor was any

military coup expected. On the face of it, there was no prospect of any change for the better. In such difficult times an ascetic with no resources took up the mission of defending Islam. By dint of his fervour, devotion, trust in God, resolve and spiritual strength alone, he brought about an internal revolution in the whole empire so that Akbar's successors turned all the more to pristine Islam. Eventually Muḥyī al-Dīn Awrangzeb took over as the Mughal ruler. The mind behind this transformation was that of the master, Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, known famously by his title, 'the reviver of the second Islamic millennium.'

"In the nineteenth century, when the 'European Mongols' or 'Crusaders' invaded the Muslim world, only the spiritual masters emerged to take on this new challenge. Their excellent character, purified souls, adherence to the Prophet's way, aversion to unbelief, rejection of worldliness and intense desire for martyrdom inspired Muslims to join their mission. In Algeria Amīr 'Abd al-Qādir⁴⁸ rose in revolt against the French colonialists and from 1832 to 1847 he made life difficult for the French rulers."

After the *‘aṣr* prayer students spend their time in games and sports. Some go to town for shopping or other needs. Many go to the canteen for a cup of tea and to entertain themselves with light, friendly conversation. Football, volleyball, cricket and badminton are popular on the campus. I usually play badminton. I am a member of the Shiblī badminton club, of which Ḥāfiẓ 'Atīq Aḥmad Bastawī is president. Among other members of this club are Dr. Mu'īd Ashraf Nadwī, Shabbīr Aḥmad Nadwī, Muḥammad Iḥsan Nadwī, Niyāz Aḥmad A'zamī and Dr Maqbūl Aḥmad Nadwī Bastawī. After *‘aṣr* prayer the Islāḥ and al-Nādī al-'Arabī libraries of are open for an hour. I usually spend some time at both libraries after the *‘aṣr* prayer to browse Arabic and Urdu newspapers and magazines, before playing badminton for 30-45 minutes.

After the prayer I came out from the northern gate of the mosque and passed by Nadwah guest-house where Mawlānā Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī stays. He hardly needs any introduction. His excellence

48 Amīr 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī (d. 1883) was an Algerian Islamic scholar, Sufi and political and military leader who led a struggle against the French invaders.

is acclaimed all over the world. After ʿaṣr he holds a public session in front of the guest-house. Prominent local people and some teachers and students of Nadwah join this blessed gathering. My interest in playing badminton is so strong that I join this gathering only occasionally.

While I was on my way to al-Nādī Library, I spotted my friend Wazīr Aḥmad Aʿzamī. He is a man of letters, with a deep commitment to fine arts. He is gifted with a critical, aesthetic sense that is rare among literary critics, and is familiar with classical and modern literary masterpieces of both prose and poetry. Thanks to my association with him I have developed some aesthetic sensibility. He has introduced me to literary critics such as Mahdī Ifādī, Niyāz Fatehpūrī and Majnūn Gorakhpuūrī. Had he focused on literary studies he would have achieved a prominent position in the field of Urdu literature and literary criticism in the subcontinent. His conversation is of immense, intoxicating appeal. One of his characteristics is to laugh unrestrainedly when awake and while sleeping, at himself and at others – in short, to laugh at everything and then continue laughing.

He gave me the good news that Mawlānā Zāhid would be reciting poems outside the canteen today. He is in this mood once or twice a month. Mawlānā Zāhid is a lively, witty conversationalist, of a most cheerful disposition, with fine taste and decent manners. His simplicity and friendliness endear him to everyone, and his mode of reciting poetry is uniquely charming. Everyone enjoys his company.

بہت لگتا ہے جی صحبت میں ان کی
وہ اپنی ذات میں ایک انجمن ہیں

One enjoys his company a lot; he is an institution in himself.

On getting this news I changed my plans. Among Mawlānā Zāhid's close circle are Wazīr, Jaʿfar Masʿūd Ḥasanī, Iṣḥāq Ḥusaynī, Suhayl Aʿzamī, ʿAbd al-Bārī Aʿzamī and myself. ʿAbd al-Bārī is junior to us at Nadwah. He is very intelligent and widely read, and in knowledge of grammar equal to Ibrāhīm. His other major

interest is hunting. Every Friday he, Suhayl and I go hunting. ʿAbd al-Bārī is the best shot among us. Suhayl is the son of Muftī and one of our close friends; he accompanies us on our outings. He is equal to Āftāb in serving his family, a person of utmost simplicity and innocence. Jaʿfar calls him 'God's cow', an expression used in Urdu for someone who is very simple and of a clean heart. Suhayl would not have been out of place had he been born in the early centuries of Islam.

As we assembled, Mawlānā Zāhid remembered some business he had to do and left, saying that he would return in fifteen minutes. We waited for his return, sitting in the open outside the canteen. We noticed a growing crowd there. We were lucky to have secured seats because we had arrived early. We learned that a football match between Nadwīs and non-Nadwīs was about to begin. The latter team comprised those students who have not yet graduated from Nadwah – it is the better by far and always wins. The Nadwī team has never recorded a victory over it. We placed our seats at an angle so as to be able both to watch the match and to listen to Mawlānā Zāhid's poetry recitation. It is a delightful evening and we are fortunate to enjoy a literary evening and a football match at the same time. It would be an injustice to ourselves if we didn't attend literary programmes during our stay in Lucknow. There is still a strong literary atmosphere in Lucknow. The Urdu language may be heard here in all its purity and eloquence. Many poets have paid glowing tributes to the literary – among other – virtues of Lucknow.

اس تنزل پر بھی ہے وہ عز و شان لکھنؤ
 سجدہ گاہ اہل دل ہے آستان لکھنؤ
 توبہ توبہ من و سلوئی کی تمنا اور میں
 من و سلوئی سے بھی بہتر آب و نان لکھنؤ
 آج بھی اس انقلاب خوں چکاں کے باوجود
 جان بازار تمدن ہے دکان لکھنؤ
 ذرہ ذرہ مہر تاباں، گرد تیری کہشیاں

اے زمین لکھنؤ اے آسمان لکھنؤ
 اپنے اپنے دور میں ساقی رہا آفاق کا
 ہر غلام حضرت پیر معان لکھنؤ
 صرف ناز مویہ تسنیم و کوثر ہی نہیں
 آبروئے نطق انساں ہے زبان لکھنؤ
 آج جتنے کارواں ہیں معرض رفتار میں
 خوشتران سب سے ہے گرد کارواں لکھنؤ
 وہ بصیرت دوسرے شہروں کے رندوں میں نہیں
 جس بصیرت کے ہیں موٹی زاہدان لکھنؤ
 کتنی لاتعداد رقص و رنگ کی بیداریاں
 تجھ میں پوشیدہ ہیں اے خواب گران لکھنؤ

Even at this decline, Lucknow has such honour and status
 Its threshold is a place of prostration for people of the heart.

I should repent if I wished for *manna* and *salwā*
 for the water and bread of Lucknow are better.

Today, in spite of this bloody turnaround in its fortune
 Lucknow remains the hub of the market of civilisation.

O earth and sky of Lucknow, you are like the sun
 That all planets and stars go round.

Lucknow has carried the laurel for human speech.

It so excels all in accomplishment. The dust of its caravans
 Exceeds the wealth of other caravans. The imagination
 Of its ascetics outruns the dreams of all inebriates elsewhere

Another poet went even further:

کم نہیں جلوہ گرمی میں ترے کوچے سے بہشت
 یہی نقشہ ہے وے اس قدر آباد نہیں

Paradise is not less than your streets in splendour;
 Same design, but not so populous

Yet another poet says:

سنا رضواں بھی جس کا خوشہ چیں ہے
وہ پیشک لکھنؤ کی سرزمیں ہے

I heard that the place where Ridwan⁴⁹ got his idea
Is in fact the land of Lucknow

As already stated, Wazīr has a keen interest in current literary criticism. Under his influence his friends too have studied the writings of Urdu critics such as Niyāz Fatehpūrī, Majnūn Gorakhpūrī, Mahdī Ifādī, Kalīm al-Dīn Aḥmad, Rashīd Aḥmad Ṣiddīqī and Āl Aḥmad Surūr. Wazīr has been studying *Nikāt-i majnūn*. While waiting for Mawlānā Zāhid's return, Wazīr took this opportunity to bring out Majnūn's critical acumen. To illustrate his point he quoted two couplets from Mīr Ḥasan's *Siḥr al-bayān*:

وہ گانے کا عالم وہ حسن بتاں
وہ گلشن کی خوبی وہ دن کا سماں
گھڑی چار دن باقی اس وقت تھا
سہانا ہر اک طرف سایہ ڈھلا
درختوں کی کچھ چھاؤں اور کچھ وہ دھوپ
وہ دھانوں کی سبزی وہ سرسوں کا روپ

In these couplets, while portraying the beauty of the garden the poet speaks of the greenery associated with rice plants and the splendour of the yellow mustard plants.

Wazīr pointedly asked my opinion of this imagery. In reply I repeated the objection levelled against it by Mawlānā Ḥālī⁵⁰ in his critical work *Muqaddimah shi'r wa-shā'irī*. One of the norms is that a poet should not state anything that is factually incorrect. Reading the above couplet one gets the impression that these two

49 The guardian of Paradise.

50 Mawlānā Aḥṭāf Ḥusayn Ḥālī (1837-1914), an Urdu poet and the last pupil of Ghālīb. He was also one of the most well-regarded biographers of Ghālīb, and a commentator on his poetry.

kinds of plant, rice and mustard, could be observed together. This is incorrect, as these two blossom in two different seasons, rice in autumn and mustard in spring.

Wazīr asserted that, following in Hālī's footsteps, all other critics have found the same fault with that couplet. Their blind conformity is the same as one notes in the case of juristic schools. Majnūn, an intelligent critic, is the first to point out that Mīr Ḥasan has alluded to the two plants figuratively in order to bring home the effect of light and shadow in the garden. He rectifies the serious mistake committed by critics in grasping this self-evident point. Far from criticising the poet for being untrue in a literal sense, they should acclaim his dextrous use of metaphors.

We were impressed by Majnūn's perceptive explanation of that couplet. We realised, in the light of his explanation, how critics – including Mawlānā Hālī – had erred.

Meanwhile, the football match had begun and Mawlānā Zāhid arrived. The Mawlānā knows long narrative poems by Josh, the *ghazals* of Majāz,⁵¹ and Kalīm 'Ājiz's poems by heart. Whenever 'Ājiz visited Nadwah, the Mawlānā recited his poems in his presence. He entertains us with recitation of these poems in our literary gatherings. He has a captivating style of recitation, which adds to the impact of the poem being read. When he recites Josh's long poems, it seems as if the words themselves are speaking.

We had tea and snacks and requested him to read out a poem. He commenced with Josh's *Pand nāmah*, which is essentially Josh's advice to Majāz to check his drunkenness, warning him against its dire consequences. Like his other poems, this poem of Josh is demonstrative of his command over diction and his forceful eloquence. Listeners are swayed by his dextrous use of language and grand style.

اے مجاز اے ترانہ بار مجاز
زندہ پیغمبر بہار مجاز

51 Majāz Radaulawī (d. 1955) was one of the founders of the Progressive Writers' Movement. He believed in revolution, but was by temperament a romantic. He never projected revolution onto his poems but sang sweet songs of revolution that matched his personality. He was a poet of love and revolution.

اے بروئے سخن و شاں گل پوش
اے بکوائے مغال تمام خروش
اے پرستار مہ رخاں جہاں
اے کمانداران شاعران جواں
تجھ سے تاباں جبین مستقبل
اے میرے سینہ امید کے دل
اے مجاز اے مبصر خد و خال
اے شعور جمال و شمع خیال
اے ثریا فریب و زہرہ نواز
شاعر مست و رند شاہد باز
ناقد عشوہ شباب ہے تو
صبح فردا کا آفتاب ہے تو
تجھ کو آیا ہوں آج سمجھانے
حیف ہے تو اگر برا مانے
خود کو غرق شراب ناب نہ کر
دیکھ اپنے کو یوں خراب نہ کر
شاعری کو تری ضرورت ہے
دور فردا کی تو امانت ہے
صرف تیری بھلائی کو اے جاں
بن کے آیا ہوں ناصح داں
ایک ٹھہراؤ ، اک مکان ہے تو
دیکھ کس درجہ دھان پان ہے تو
ننگ ہے محض استخوان ہونا
سخت اہانت ہے ناتواں ہونا

ننگ ہے محض. اتخواں ہونا
 سخت اہانت ہے ناتواں ہونا
 ناتوانی ہے اک گناہ عظیم
 ”جسم“ اور ”علم“ طرفہ طاقت ہے
 یہی انسان کی نبوت ہے
 جو ضعیف و علیل ہوتا ہے
 عشق میں بھی ذلیل ہوتا ہے
 ہر ہنر کو جو ایک دولت ہے
 علم اور جسم کی ضرورت ہے
 کثرت بادہ رنگ لاتی ہے
 آدمی کو لہو رلاتی ہے

The poem opens with a tribute to Majāz's poetic genius and his immense potential; he is gifted with a remarkable aesthetic sensibility. However, he appears to be addicted to alcohol. He should pay heed to the poet's advice, without taking offence. He should not destroy his body and soul with excessive drinking, for everyone looks forward to the blossoming of his poetic talent. Accepting this advice is in his own interest, and he should awaken to the importance of sound health and knowledge. Weakness brings reproach onto one; drunkenness is a self-destructive course.

Mawlānā Zāhid's recitation was interrupted by the noise on the football field. We learnt that the non-Nadwī team had scored a goal against the Nadwī team. 'Abd al-Bārī, being allied with the former, celebrated it and teased us. As the noise subsided, the Mawlānā resumed his recitation of Josh's poem.

گوہر شاہ وار چن پیارے
 مجھ سے اک گر کی بات سن پیارے

غم تو بنتا ہے چار دن میں نشاط
 شادمانی سے رہ بہت محتاط
 غم کے مارے تو جی رہے ہیں ہزار
 نہیں بچتے ہیں عیش کے بیمار
 آن میں دل ک پار ہونی ہے
 پنکھڑی میں وہ دھار ہوتی ہے
 ہاں سنبھل کر لطافتوں کو برت
 ٹوٹ جائے کہیں نہ کوئی پرت
 دیکھ کر شیشہ نشاط اٹھا
 یہ ورق ورق ہے سونے کا
 تیغ مستی کو احتیاط سے چھو
 ورنہ ٹپکے گا انگلیوں سے لہو
 ہاں ادب سے اٹھا ادب سے جام
 تاکہ آب حلال ہو نہ حرام
 جام پر جام جو چڑھاتے ہیں
 ادب کی طرح بلبلاتے ہیں
 زندگی کی ہوس میں مرتے ہیں
 مے کو رسوائے دہر کرتے ہیں

He advises Majāz to be careful in drinking or else he will suffer greatly. A drunkard leads a horrible life, which he must avoid. This is followed by an account of the improprieties committed by drunkards. Josh is to be complimented for his graphic portrayal, using both ordinary and archaic diction. We were also struck by the Mawlānā's sharp memory as he fluently read out one couplet after another. Furthermore, he modulated his tone, in keeping with the tenor of each couplet.

یاد ہے جب جگر چڑھاتے تھے
 کیا الف ہو کے ہن ہناتے تھے
 میری گردن میں بھر کے چند آہیں
 پاؤں سے ڈالتے تھے وہ ہانہیں
 عقل کی موت علم کی پستی
 الاماں لعنت سیہ مستی
 اف گھٹا ٹوپ نشے کا طوقاں
 بھوت، عفریت، دیو، جن، شیطان
 لات گھونسہ چھری چھری چاکو
 لب لباب لعاب کف بدبو
 طنز آوازہ برہمی افساد
 طعن، تشنیع، مضحکہ ایراد
 شور ہو، حق، ابے تے، ہے ہے
 اوکھیاں، گالیاں، دھماکے، قے
 مس مسابھ، غشی، تپش، چکر
 سوز، سیلاب، سنسنی، صرصر
 چل چٹے چٹے چٹاں چٹیں چٹکھاڑ
 چٹے چٹے چٹاں چٹیں چٹکھاڑ
 لپاڈگی، تام، لام، لڑائی
 بول، بیجان، بانگ، ہاتھا پائی
 کھل بلی، کاؤں کاؤں کھڈ منڈل
 ہونک ہنگامہ ہمہ ہمہ ہل چل
 الجھن، آوارگی، ادھم، اپٹھن
 بھونک، بھول بھول، بھن بھن، بھن بھن

دھول دھپا، دھکڑ پکڑ، دھسکار
 تہلکہ، تو تڑاک، تف، تکرار
 بو، بھبک بھے بکس بر بھونچال
 دبدبے دندنا ہنٹیں دھمال
 گاہ نرمی و لطف و مہر و سلام
 گاہ تلخی و ترشی و دشنام
 عقل کی موت علم کی پستی
 الاماں لعنت یہ مستی
 صرف نشے کی بھیگنے دے میں
 ان کو بننے نہ دے کبھی موچھیں

Josh effectively draws a picture of how drunkards misbehave. Their misconduct in public only brings disgrace upon them. They create public disorder and are detested by everyone. Even if Majāz drinks, he should regulate his drinking.

The recitation was once again interrupted by the din on the field. We were pleased to note that the Nadwī team had scored an equaliser – it gave us some hope of victory. The Mawlānā too, was delighted with the good performance of the Nadwī team. He resumed his recitation.

ذہن انسانی کو بخشتا ہے جمال
 نشہ ہو جب بہ قدر نور ہلال
 غرقہ عقل بھیڑ تو اکثر
 پر اسے کچھ کچا کے بند نہ کر
 رات کو لطف جام ہے پیارے
 دن کا پینا حرام ہے پیارے

Meanwhile, the non-Nadwī team scored another goal. Now we feared that the Nadwī team would be defeated. Mr Zāhid continued his recitation:

کر نہ پامال حرمت اوقات
رات کو دن بنا نہ دن کو رات
پی مگر صرف شام کے ہنگام
اور وہ بھی بہ قدر یک دو جام
وہی انسان ہے خرم و خورسند
جو ہے مقدار و وقت کا پابند
میرے پینے ہی پر نہ جا مری جاں
مجھ سے جینا بھی سکھ میں قرباں
اس کے پینے میں رنگ آتا ہے
جس کو جینے کا ڈھنگ آتا ہے
یہ نصائح بہت ہیں پیش بہا
جلد سو، جلد جاگ، جلد نہا

In this section of his poem Josh reiterates his assertion that 'drinking should be only in a moderate measure'. Josh, unfortunately here, with this wordly wisdom, contradicts the teachings of Islam which by no means permit even moderate drinking. He was the product of an age in which, unhappily, poets and others drank a great deal. He continues that Majāz should act on his advice and lead a normal, healthy life and follow the precept 'early to bed and early to rise'.

اے پیر، اے برادر، اے ہم راز
بن نہ اس طرح دور کی آواز
کوئی پیار تن تن نہیں سکتا
خادم خلق بن نہیں سکتا

خدمت خلق فرض ہے تجھ پر
 دور ماضی کا قرض ہے تجھ پر
 عصر حاضر کے شاعر خود دار
 قرض داری کی موت سے ہشیار
 ذہن انسانیت ابھار کے جا
 زندگی کا قرض اتار کے جا
 تجھ پہ ہندوستان ناز کرے
 عمر تیری خدا دراز کرے

He should go for morning walks and enjoy the beauty of nature. He addresses Majāz as his son, his brother and his confidant. The advice concludes on a sincere note, urging Majāz to engage in something useful, in serving humanity, which will bring glory to him and his country and bless him with a long, happy life.

Even after the Mawlānā had finished reciting this long poem there was no sign of boredom or exhaustion on his face. As he looked fresh, Ja'far requested him to recite some *ghazals* of Kalīm 'Ājiz. He obliged us and recited the opening couplet.

اس ناز اس انداز سے تم ہائے چلو ہو
 روز ایک غزل ہم سے کہلوائے چلو ہو

'Abd al-Bārī, however, interrupted, objecting to the poet's choice of unusual diction. Ja'far replied that that was the poet's speciality. So doing, 'Ājiz emulates the great Urdu poet, Mir Taqī Mir.⁵² The Mawlānā then resumed his recitation and read out the whole *ghazal*:

52 Mir Taqī Mir (1723-1810) is, perhaps, the biggest name in Urdu poetry; every poet, including Ghālib, has acknowledged Mir's greatness. From his time to the present Mir's verses have had the same effect on readers because Mir articulated emotions that a human heart experiences in life. Many of his couplets have become part of the language that we use every day, and some of them have become idioms. The most important aspect of Mir's poetry is that unlike other poets (including poets of other languages) all of his writing is of a consistently high quality.

رکھنا ہے کہیں پاؤں تو رکھو ہو کہیں پاؤں
 چلنا ذرا آیا ہے تو اترائے چلو ہو
 کیا ٹھاٹھ سے گلشن کی ہوا کھائے چلو ہو
 ے میں کوئی خامی ہے نہ ساغر میں کوئی کھوٹ
 پینا نہیں آیا ہے تو چھلکائے چلو ہو
 ہم کچھ نہیں کہتے ہیں کوئی کچھ نہیں کہتا
 تم کیا ہو تمہیں سب سے کہلوائے چلو ہو
 زلفوں کی تو فطرت ہے لیکن میرے پیارے
 زلفوں سے بھی زیادہ بل کھائے چلو ہو
 وہ شوخ ستم گر تو ستم ڈھائے چلے ہے
 تم ہو کہ کلیم اپنی غزل گائے چلو ہو

It is indeed exquisite and imbued with layers of meaning. By the time it is over, three goals had been scored against the Nadwī team. Since the match was still on, Ishāq requested Mawlānā Zāhid to recite Kalīm 'Ājiz's poem, which he had written spontaneously and is addressed to the then Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.

میرے ہی لہو پر گزر اوقات کرو ہو
 مجھ سے ہی امیروں کی طرح بات کرو ہو

'Abd al-Bārī, once again, took strong exception to the poet's use of unusual diction. It was defended with reference to the precedent set by Mīr. 'Abd al-Bārī was censured for his inability to appreciate poetry and was asked to keep quiet. Mawlānā said that it is of the presence of people like 'Abd al-Bārī in the poetic assemblies that Mīrzā Ṣā'ib complains:

صائب دو چیز می شکندر قدر شعر مارا
 تحسین ناشناس و سکوت سخن شناس

Ṣā'ib, two things wreck the worth of our poetry:
the applause of the ignorant, and the silence of the connoisseur.

Ja'far requested that some allowance be made for 'Abd al-Bārī in view of his young age.

وعذر من لم يبلغ العشرين
يقبل عند الناس أجمعينا

The excuse of one who has not reached his twentieth year
is accepted by all people.

The Mawlānā is a good-hearted person; he was placated and read out another *ghazal*.

میرے ہی لہو پر گرز اوقات کرو ہو
مجھ سے ہی امیروں کی طرح بات کرو ہو
دن ایک ستم ایک ستم رات کرو ہو
وہ دوست ہو دشمن کو بھی مات کرو ہو
ہم خاک نشیں تم سخن آرائے سر پام
پاس آکر ملو دور سے کیا بات کرو ہو
ہم کو جو ملا ہے وہ تمہیں سے تو ملا ہے
ہم اور بھلا دیں تمہیں کیا بات کرو ہو
یوں تو منہ پھیر کے دیکھو بھی نہیں ہو
جب وقت پڑے ہے تو مدارات کرو ہو
نہ دامن پہ کوئی چھینٹ نہ خنجر پہ کوئی داغ
تم قتل کرو ہو کہ کرامات کرو ہو
بکنے دو عاجز کو جو بولے ہے بکے ہے
دیوانہ ہے دیوانے سے کیا بات کرو ہو

It is my blood and toil that you rest upon
 Then you address me like an arrogant wealthy one.
 You commit one atrocity by day and another by night.
 Your friendship has proved worse than the worst enemies.
 We are squatters on the ground, you address us from the roof-ridge:
 Come nearer to us, why talk to us from so far away?
 Whatever we have got, it came from you
 So how can you say we ignore you?
 At times you cannot spare us even a sideways glance
 Till the time you are in need, then you are so polite.

When you kill it is no murder but a miracle:
 No stain upon your dagger, no tell-tale sign upon your clothes

But you know me: I am 'Ājiz⁵³ the mad one who says
 What he says. Why waste your time talking to me?

Once the recitation was over, Wazīr made his observation about 'Ājiz's poetry, saying that he had successfully emulated Mīr in style, mode and other features. It was time for the *maghrib* prayer and the match was also over. The Nadwī team had only scored one goal while the opponents had achieved three. We felt ashamed at the defeat. Suhayl was upset. Mawlānā Zāhid said, "Be comforted that the margin of defeat was not so great; the students' team could have inflicted a more humiliating defeat on you. Moreover, the students let the Nadwī team score at least one goal – otherwise they would have faced a still more humiliating defeat." He is a committed Nadwī and feels strongly about the defeat. His manner resembled what the poet of Ḥamāsah says:

لو كنت من مازن لم تستبح إلي
 بنو اللقيطة من ذهل بن شيبانا

Had I been from the tribe of Māzin, then the clan of Laqīṭah from
 Dhuhl ibn Shaybān would not have taken away my camels.

⁵³ A play on the poet's well-known pseudonym; 'Ājiz' means 'helpless', here with indignation.

While the Mawlānā was commenting on our team, the *adhān* for the *maghrib* prayer was called. We went to the mosque and prayed behind Mawlānā Sa'īd al-Raḥmān.

Today, after the *maghrib* prayer, at the Sulaymāniyyah hall there is a seminar by Mawlānā 'Abdullāh 'Abbās Nadwī and Mawlānā Abū al-'Irfān Nadwī on the issue of education and upbringing. Both of them are well-versed in classical and modern methods of education and theories on upbringing. It is an important topic to be tackled by two leading educationists. However, the time after *maghrib* is very precious to me because I have allocated it for private study, particularly of classical texts. That is why I declined Āftāb's offer to attend the seminar. I asked him for a review of the seminar over dinner.

On my way to the hostel I meet Šābir, who stays in the same hostel, on the ground floor. He tells me that he is still not satisfied, even after the discussion at noon about Imām al-Bukhārī's conditions and methodology. I, however, tell him that despite the importance of this topic I cannot discuss it now. It is time for my private study and for the same reason I did not attend the seminar. I tell him we can have a thorough discussion later, especially when Āftāb and other friends will be present.

Šābir observed that the Imām's expertise is enviable, for he has recorded many reports by Abū al-Yamān on Shu'ayb's authority. However, he excludes the report of Abū al-Yamān, which is slightly flawed, from his collection. I drew his attention to a more telling example of the Imām's assiduity. He has cited reports from Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād who is extolled by al-Dhahabī as an imām, 'allāmah and ḥāfiẓ. Al-Dhahabī speaks highly of Nu'aym's extensive writings and his devotion to the *Sunnah*. Yet ḥadīth scholars have called his retentive power into question. Imām Muslim has not drawn upon him in his collection. Only one ḥadīth on his authority features in the introduction to his book.

Imām al-Bukhārī has, nonetheless, recorded several reports on his authority in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* and *Ta'liqāt*. Look at Imām al-Bukhārī's greatness: he has not included in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* any report of Nu'aym that is flawed in any way or criticised by any expert of ḥadīth.

For example, Nu‘aym’s report that he narrated from Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah, from Abī al-Zinād, from al-A‘raj, from Abū Hurayrah, which reads as follows: “You belong to an era in which, if you disregard even one-tenth of your religion, you will meet with destruction. However, there will be a time when, if my community acts on only one-tenth of religion, they will attain deliverance.” Imām al-Tirmidhī⁵⁴ includes it in the last part of *Kitāb al-ḥitan*. However, it is not recorded by any of the other students of Sufyān. In fact, they contend that this report does not figure in any of his works. On noting this criticism, Nu‘aym states in his defence that during his company with Sufyān, some students committed a mistake, which was severely censured by Ibn ‘Uyaynah, who then related that particular ḥadīth. This clarifies the matter. Al-Dhahabī affirms that Nu‘aym had heard these words from Ibn ‘Uyaynah. What happened is that Ibn ‘Uyaynah mentioned a chain, and before narrating the ḥadīth, some impropriety was committed in his assembly, then Ibn ‘Uyaynah uttered the above-mentioned words. Nu‘aym misunderstood and combined those words of Sufyān with that chain.

Ṣābir acknowledged that Imām al-Bukhārī had been cautious in his selection of ḥadīth narrators. It is nonetheless surprising that if the selected ḥadīths of Nu‘aym could be given a place in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, then why had Imām al-Bukhārī overlooked the ḥadīth reports narrated by Ḥammād ibn Salamah ibn Dīnār? The latter is held in much esteem by all the ‘*ulamā*’, and is known by the title of Imām and Shaykh al-Islām. Imām Muslim recognises him as an authority and cites him in his ḥadīth collection in *Uṣūl*. One of the objections raised by Imām al-Daraqūṭnī⁵⁵ against Imām al-Bukhārī is that the latter ignored reports by Ḥammād. I agreed with Ṣābir that it is a complicated issue. Ḥammād is undoubtedly an authority, yet his retentive power was not as strong as that of Ḥammād ibn Zayd and others. His reports from Thābit al-Bunānī are authentic and

54 Imām Abū ‘Āsa Muḥammad ibn ‘Isa al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH), author one of the six sound books of ḥadīth.

55 Imām Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn ‘Umar al-Daraqūṭnī (d. 385 AH), a great traditionist and well-known authority on the methodology of ḥadīth.

Imām Muslim only cited these. Imām al-Bukhārī has cited a single report from Ḥammād, which has come through Thābit, which is: “قال لنا أبو الوليد حدثنا حماد بن سلمة” i.e. “Abu’l-Walīd said to us: Hammad ibn Salamah narrated to us....” His beginning the ḥadīth with قال لنا “he said to us” makes it plain that he did not consider this chain a strong one.

Ṣābir conceded that Ḥammād was not a very accurate narrator, which is why Imām al-Bukhārī neglected his reports. “Then how is it that the report ‘من عادى لي وليا فقد آذنته بالحرب’ ‘whoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, then I have declared war on him’ is included in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī? Its chain of narrators is not very strong either. Imām al-Bukhārī has cited the chain comprising Ibn Karāmah – Khālīd ibn Makhlad – Sulaymān ibn Bilāl – Sharīk ibn Abī Namir – ‘Aṭā’ – Abū Hurayrah. Imām al-Dhahabī rightly takes exception to its inclusion. ‘هذا حديث غريب جدا، لو لاهيبة الجامع الصحيح لعدوه في منكرات خالد بن مخلد’ ‘This ḥadīth is very *gharib*.⁵⁶ If it were not for the awe felt for the *Jami’ al-Sahih* they would definitely have counted it among the rejected⁵⁷ ḥadīth of Khalid ibn Makhlad.’ Its wording is unusual. Sharīk’s inclusion in the chain is dubious. Moreover, he was not a *ḥāfiẓ*. This text has only this single chain. Al-Bukhārī alone has mentioned this ḥadīth. ‘Aṭā’’s identity is uncertain – he could be ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Rabāḥ or ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Yāsār.” I, however, said that it was immaterial, because both of them are equally reliable. “Yet its inclusion in Bukhārī’s collection is intriguing, for it is not found in Aḥmad’s *Musnad* either. This is the only ḥadīth report in the whole collection of al-Bukhārī that is not above board. Ibn Hajar does not offer any satisfactory explanation, though he has tried to do so.”⁵⁸ I told Ṣābir that we would delve further into it at a later time.

56 *Gharib* or ‘unusual’ ḥadīth have a single narrator at some point in their chain of transmission.

57 *Munkar* or ‘rejected’ ḥadīth are those whose meanings contradict *ayat* of Qur’an or other reliably established ḥadīth.

58 It is well to note that this discussion is really about the *isnad* of the ḥadīth, since the text in the same or similar words is widely narrated by a large number of ḥadīth scholars. See ḥadīth 38 in Ibn Rajab al-Hanbalī’s *Jami’ al-ulum wa’l-hikam* (its translation published as the *Compendium of Knowledge and Wisdom* by Turath Publishing) for a very full examination of this issue as well as of the luminous meanings of the ḥadīth.

Lately I have been studying Ibn Sīnā's *al-Shifā'*. This 18-volume work is a testament to Ibn Sīnā's mastery of the rational sciences. The Greeks had made only a preliminary study of logic, but this discipline was enlarged by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Abū 'Ubaydah al-Jūzjānī had been Ibn Sīnā's disciple for years and recorded his works. According to him, Ibn Sīnā had dictated this voluminous work from memory. Apart from *al-Shifā'*, his *Kitāb al-najāt* and *al-Ishārāt* cover the same ground. All these three titles are on logic, natural sciences and metaphysics. I have read a major part of *al-Shifā'*. At this time I am studying the chapter on *al-jadal* "deductive reasoning". This chapter demonstrates that Ibn Sīnā is not a mere imitator of Aristotle. The later scholar has given it another name, which underscores Ibn Sīnā's evolutionary approach to the topic. For him, obviously, *jadāl* "deductive reasoning" is inferior to *burhān* "proof". He is of the view that knowledge is obtained through perfect reasoning and certain analogy; and the certain analogy is *burhān*. Man should therefore seek it first. He also recognises other modes of analogy and speculation. For him, *jadāl* is essential to organising society. It is thus clear that *burhānī* logic relates to natural sciences and *jadālī* logic relates to social sciences.

At 8 pm, while I was engrossed in study, Mawlānā Shāhbāz arrived. He usually arrives at the same time, and we go together to the mosque for 'ishā' prayer. Āftāb arrived as well and apprised me of the seminar's proceedings. Mawlānā 'Abdullāh 'Abbās's talk covered the topic in the light of his first-hand experience of the educational system in Europe and the Arab world. His presentation was followed by that of Mawlānā Abū al-'Irfān who opened his talk with a couplet by Aṣghar Gondawī:

یہی تھوڑی سے مے ہے اور یہی چھوٹا سا پیانہ
اسی سے رند راز گنبد مینا سمجھتے ہیں

This is a little wine, and this is a small glass,
by which the drunkards grasp the secrets of heaven.

Mawlānā Abū al-'Irfān emphasised that his presentation was based wholly on his local experience. As he had not been abroad,

the apt use of this couplet added to the beauty of his talk. Mawlānā Shabbāz enjoyed it too. He loved Aṣghar's poetry in view of its sublimity, mystical character and noble thoughts. Mawlānā Shabbāz has a very refined literary taste. He continuously reads and studies the poetic works of Aṣghar, deriving much pleasure from them as they renew his faith in monotheism. Mawlānā praised Aṣghar saying: "Combined in Aṣghar are the best features of Ghālib's and Mīr Dard's poetry, in that he has borrowed pathos and grand style from them." He was a very pious person. His poetry was characterised by philosophical thought, wisdom, brilliant ideas and an amalgam of knowledge, gnosis, and mysticism. He did not indulge in any vulgarity and hence he is most appreciated by the elite.

جسے لینا ہو آکر اس سے اب درس جنوں لے لے
 سنا ہے ہوش میں ہے اصغر دیوانہ برسوں سے

Whoever wants can come and take from him the lesson of madness.
 I have heard that the mad Aṣghar has been in
 consciousness for years.

Among latter day poets, Mawlānā Shabbāz loves Fānī Badāyūnī's poetry in the same way that he is fond of Aṣghar. Mawlānā said that Fānī's poetry holds a mirror up to life. If Aṣghar's poetry is influenced by Ghālib and Dard, Fānī's poetry offers a blend of the pleasant features of Mīr Taqī Mīr and Ghālib. We requested the Mawlānā to recite an example of Fānī's *ghazals*. He obliged us.

اک معمر ہے سمجھنے کا نہ سمجھانے کا
 زندگی کا ہے کو ہے خواب ہے دیوانے کا
 زندگی بھی تو پیشیاں ہے یہاں لا کے مجھے
 ڈھونڈتی ہے کوئی حیلہ مرے مرجانے کا
 تو نے دیکھا ہے کبھی گھر کو بدلتے ہوئے رنگ
 آؤ دیکھو نا تماشا مرے غم خانے کا

اب اسے دار پہ لے جا کے سلاوے ساقی
 یوں بہکتا نہیں اچھا ترے دیوانے کا
 دل سے پہنچی تو ہیں آنکھوں میں لہو کی بوندیں
 سلسلہ شیشے سے ملتا تو ہے پیانے کا
 ہر نفس عمر گزشتہ کی ہے میت فانی
 زندگی نام ہے مر مر کے جئے جانے کا

In this *ghazal* Fānī tackles a variety of issues. First, he defines life as an unfathomable riddle. He then relates his personal tragedy, which is life-in-death. The Mawlānā offered a brilliant exposition of the concluding couplet. While we were enjoying his remarks on the poetry of Asghar and Fānī it became time for dinner. Muṭī^c al-Raḥmān joined us. He entered the room, reciting a couplet.

ایک طفل دبستاں ہے فلاطوں مرے آگے
 کیا منہ ہے ارسطو جو کرے چوں مرے آگے
 بولے ہے یہی خامہ کہ کس کس کو میں باندھوں
 بادل سے چلے آتے ہیں مضمون مرے آگے

Compared to me, Plato is no more than a school child,
 Aristotle does not have the tongue to open his mouth in front of me,
 the pen asks "what should I record?"
 the meanings are revealed to me continuously from heaven.

Muṭī^c al-Raḥmān is one of our close friends, with a special interest in *fiqh*, logic and Urdu and Persian poetry. He knows many poems by the Persian poet Qāānī by heart and sometimes he reads out to us that poem of Qāānī's which begins with the couplet:

تسیم غلدی وزد مگر ز جو بیارها
 که یوئے عشق می دهد هوئے مرغزارها
 فراز خاک و نشتها دمیده سبز کشتها
 چه کشتها بهشتها نه ده نه صد هزارها

The Mawlānā observed that Qāānī is one of the great poets of the later period. The 13th century AH (19th century CE) was a period of decline in Persian poetry, so the presence of Qāānī in that period in Iran is no less than a miracle. How good this poem of his is:

بهشت را چه می کنم تا بهشت من تویی
 بهار و باغ من تویی ریاض و کشت من تویی
 بکن هر آنچه می کنی که سر نوشت من تویی
 بدل نا غامبی زمن که در سرشت من تویی
 نهفته در عروق من چو پودبا بتارها

What would I do with Paradise, O my beloved? you are my Paradise
 You are my garden and my spring, my orchard and flower-bed.
 You can do whatever you will for it is you who are my destiny:
 You are ever-present in my heart being a part of my very being
 Hidden within my veins like life in the stem of the flower.

When Muṭī^c al-Raḥmān saw us eating bareheaded, he was offended and asked us why we did not follow the *Sunnah* in this matter. ‘Umar Laddākhī replied that, despite his close study of ḥadīth on the norms of eating, he had yet to come across any ḥadīth that recommends that one’s head be covered while eating. He asked Muṭī^c al-Raḥmān to cite a relevant ḥadīth. He replied that he had always observed members of Tablīghī Jamā‘at doing so and they do not act against the *Sunnah*. The Mawlānā then reasoned with him that the practice of any individual or a group is not an argument. One should substantiate his action with the *Sunnah*. This reminded

me of the incident involving Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, who says: “I met ‘Abd-al Mālik ibn al-Mājishūn in Madinah and sought his ruling on a matter, which he duly issued. When I asked him to substantiate it, he referred to Imām Mālik’s practice. I was surprised and said to him: ‘I ask you to present evidence, and you are presenting the opinion of your teacher. You and your teacher both need to cite evidence and proof.’”⁵⁹

While we were eating, the adhān for the ‘*ishā*’ prayer was called. We cleared the table and did *wuḍū’*, before going out for prayer along with the Mawlānā. On the way I asked his opinion about Imām Ibn Taymiyyah’s work *al-Radd ‘alā al-mantiqiyyīn*, which is a forceful presentation. Shiblī speaks highly of his cogent arguments in his articles. This brings to my mind Ibn Sīnā’s *al-Shifā’*, which reflects the sharpness of his mind, yet in which he failed to detect the inherent weakness in logic. The Mawlānā replied that both parties are guilty of extremism. Logicians are not justified in their claim that logic alone guides man to truth, and that *dalīl burhānī* is firm evidence. Nor is Ibn Taymiyyah unassailable in holding that logic is pointless. Logical evidence is persuasive. The arguments employed by an opponent may be countered in order to persuade him of his false position. Logical arguments in themselves are neither true nor false. Ibn Sīnā is largely aware of the fallacy of logic. His discussion on numbers proves the above point. When in *al-Shifā’* he defines number, and says that two is the double of one, and one is half of two, it makes clear that the claim of the logicians that the comprehension of every perception needs definition is an exaggeration.

While we were listening to the Mawlānā the *iqāmah* was said, and so we joined the congregation for ‘*ishā*’. Mawlānā Sa‘īd al-Raḥmān led the prayer. When we came out, it was time for Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwī’s session. Mawlānā Shahbāz was waiting. Soon we were joined by Āftāb and Ḥaydar Nepālī. Ḥaydar has a special inclination towards *fiqh*. He is a real gentleman. Ḥaydar lamented that some ḥanafīs, when travelling, combine two prayers. I, however, pointed out that a rigid stance should not be taken on this matter, as some ḥadīths allow this practice and many ‘ulamā’

59 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a’lām al-nubalā’*, 10:53-54.

subscribe to it. He persisted in saying that ḥanafī *fiqh* does not allow it in any circumstances. I disagreed with him, pointing out that the principles of even ḥanafī *fiqh* sanction it. Ḥaydar recited the Qur'ānic verse that prayer is to be offered by Muslims at the appointed times. In his opinion, the verse is decisive and it categorically states that a prayer must be offered at its time. This command cannot be modified. I drew his attention to the evident flaw in his argument; pilgrims offer combined prayers at 'Arafāt and Muzdalifah. This standard practice underscores that the Qur'ānic command is not absolute. Once a Qur'ānic verse has been given a specific understanding in certain circumstances, according to ḥanafī principles of jurisprudence, it can be specified further by a single report or analogy. Hanafis should modify their stance accordingly. They should allow combining prayers during a journey or sickness, as is allowed in the ḥadīths.

Ḥaydar referred to the ḥadīth cited by al-Tirmidhī that once the Prophet, peace be upon him, had combined prayers even without the excuse of rain, sickness or travel. However, al-Tirmidhī labels it one of the two ḥadīths in his book that has not been followed by anyone. I endorsed the Imām's stance, as acting on that ḥadīth would have amounted to neglecting the Qur'ānic verse. Āftāb's point was that the ḥadīth permitting combined prayers should be interpreted in a way that no contradiction might appear between the Qur'ān and ḥadīth. I said that the formal combination has two problems: first, that the example of combination that exists is not formal combination; rather it is real combination. The practice at 'Arafāt and Muzdalifah is clear evidence. The second problem is that the issues of travelling are based on ease; if we interpret combination as formal, then it makes the time slots more narrow, in which case the traveller will have more trouble.

While we were engaged in this discussion it became time for the Mawlānā's assembly. We headed towards the guesthouse. Mawlānā Nadhr al-Ḥafīz was in front of us, and we said *salām* to him. His specialisation is in literature and journalism with a thorough study of Western media. Mawlānā Shams al-Ḥaqq Nadwī was also there, and we greeted him. He is an Urdu prose stylist and editor of

Ta' mīr-i hayāt, and a decent person of gentle, polite manners.

We took our seats. The Mawlānā recounted incidents of pious persons, especially examples of their indifference to worldliness. He first related the following incident. One scholar used to teach students in a mosque. Since he had a pain in his knees, he sat with his legs stretched out towards the door. One day a local chief called on him. However, he continued his lecture, paying no attention to him and keeping his legs out-stretched. When the lecture was over, as the chief left, he held out a bag of gold coins to him. The scholar declined, saying that someone who extends his legs does not extend his hands.

The other incident was about the famous ḥadīth scholar, Sayyid Muḥammad Mubārak Bilgrāmī. Once he fell unconscious while doing *wuḍū'*. His student, Mīr Ṭufayl Muḥammad Bilgrāmī rushed to his rescue. The former regained consciousness after an hour. On being asked persistently, he told his student that since he had not taken food for three days, he had become weak. He had not borrowed money nor had he asked anyone's help. The student was deeply moved. He went home and brought him a large number of dishes of food. The scholar prayed for blessings for him, yet he declined the food, telling him: "If you do not mind, let me tell you that as you left me, the thought crossed my mind that you would bring food for me. In Sufi parlance it is known as *ishrāf al-nafs* 'eagerness of the self'. *Fiqh* scholars allow that food be accepted in such circumstances. The Shari'ah even allows one to eat something unlawful, if one does not have food for three days. However, I cannot accept this food, as I was expecting it." The latter went back with the food. A little later, he brought the same food back to his teacher. He asked him whether he had been expecting food this time. As he said that he had not, he asked him to accept it, because he had brought him the food without any eagerness on the part of his self. It greatly pleased the scholar, who complimented the student on his presence of mind. The Mawlānā concluded with Iqbal's couplet –

دنیائے دوں کی کب تک غلامی
یا راہی کر یا بادشاہی

How long be a slave to the mean world?
Practise asceticism or kingly rule!

– and commented that a king is still a slave to this world whereas an ascetic transcends materialism.

The Mawlānā's session was over at 10 pm. I returned to my hostel. I would generally come back to my hostel immediately after 'ishā' prayer for private study. A few days back I have finished studying Imām Ibn al-Qayyim's *I'lām al-muwaqqi'in*, and I have now taken up Imām al-Shātibī's *al-Muwāfaqāt*. Today I returned home late due to the Mawlānā's session. In my room I found all my friends busy in conversation. Among them were Ibrāhīm, Wazīr, 'Abd al-Ḥayy, Ḥashmatullāh and Khālid. When friends gather, we study less and talk more, because there ensues a heated discussion on almost any issue. Wazīr was, as usual, raising points about Urdu literary figures. Today, Shiblī was the focus of attention. For him, Shiblī ushered Urdu into a new phase. Prior to him, Urdu was confined to the limited topics of poetry and literature, but he treated a wide variety of subjects and different sciences and branches of knowledge in Urdu. Shiblī's language was very clear and simple, his narration very lively and attractive, his arguments very scholarly and his devotion to Islam genuine. According to the Urdu literary historian, Ḥāmid Ḥasan Qādirī, Shiblī was the first to grasp the significance of writing style. He was gifted with a refined taste and adopted a style that was very appropriate to the subject matter. Āftāb endorsed the above observation by Wazīr and referred to Sir Syed's testimonial, as it appears in his foreword to Shiblī's *al-Ma'mūn*: "Shiblī writes such chaste and idiomatic Urdu as is envied by even the natives of Delhi."

Wazīr resumed the note of his admiration, drawing attention to the varied writings of Shiblī on a range of significant topics such as *Shi'r al-ajam*,⁶⁰ a perceptive survey of Persian literary history; *al-Fārūq*, a brilliant account of the accomplishments of the Caliph 'Umar ibn

60 The distinguished Orientalist E.G. Browne is the author of the *Literary History of Persia*. He has frequently cited in it Shiblī's work. When introducing a Persian poet he first reproduced Shiblī's assessment of that poet. He regretted very much that he was not able to meet Shiblī.

al-Khattāb; *al-Nu' mān*, a profile of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and a history of the codification of *fiqh*; *al-Ma'mūn*, a life sketch of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn and, more importantly, an account of the intellectual exchange between India, Greece and Arabia; *al-Ghazālī*, a tribute to the genius of al-Ghazālī⁶¹; his history of *al-kalām* and his *magnum opus*, his biography of the Prophet, *Sīrat al-nabī*, which drew upon the latest methodology and modern principles of biography. Were any of Shiblī's contemporaries equal to him in any of his academic, scholarly and literary distinctions? Wazīr once again cited Ḥāmid Ḥasan Qādirī's opinion that Shiblī was later than Āzād and Ḥālī in writing on literary history, criticism and biography, but excelled them in all these fields. When Shiblī wrote on some topic, he did justice to it. He set standards, for the first time, on how to write biography and literary criticism. He was the first to contribute valuable books on *Sīrah* and literary history. On comparing his works with those of Āzād and Ḥālī, it becomes clear that he did not get any guidance from the latter. His writings do not reflect any influence from his predecessors. For *Sīrat al-nabī* and *al-Fārūq*, there was no model in *Darbār-i akbarī* and *Ḥayāt-i sa'dī*. Similarly, the first three parts of *Shī'r al-ajam* are not an imitation of *Āb-i ḥayāt*, whereas the fifth part is much higher than *Muqaddimah shī'r wa shā'irī*. According to Qādirī, Shiblī stands out above his contemporaries in his style, as a biographer, critic, historian and writer on the *sīrah*.

Hashmatullāh wondered why Wazīr had not referred to Shiblī's other works, such as *Muwāzanah anīs wa dabīr*, *Sawāniḥ mawlānā rūm* and *al-Intiqād*, even though these too, in his opinion, are masterpieces.

Wazīr stated that Mahdī Ifādī was the first to acclaim Shiblī's greatness in Urdu. Mahdī's pieces have a charm and beauty of their own. These give a clear picture of the evolutionary stages through which the Urdu language has passed. Wazīr referred also to the glowing tribute paid to Shiblī's genius in Urdu poetry by Nadhīr Aḥmad:

61 Imām Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1128), one of the outstanding figures in the field of philosophy, theology and Sufism. He was a prolific writer. His most famous work is *Iḥyā' ulūm al-dīn*.

تم اپنی نثر کو لو، نظم کو چھوڑو نذیر احمد
کہ اس کے واسطے موزوں ہیں حالی اور نعمانی

Stick to prose, and quit poetry, O Nadhīr Aḥmad.
For that, Ḥālī and Nu'mānī are better equipped

Shibli's poetry is marked by force and pathos. His poem *Shahr āshob-i islām* relates the tragedy that struck the Muslim community after the loss of the Balkans:

حکومت پر زوال آیا تو پھر نام و نشان کب تک
چراغِ کشتہ محفل سے اٹھے گا دھواں کب تک
قبائے سلطنت کے گرفتار نے کر دیئے پرزے
فضائے آسمانی میں اڑیں گی دھجیاں کب تک
کوئی پوچھے کہ اے تہذیب انسانی کے استادو
یہ ظلم آرائیاں تاکے یہ حشر انگیزیاں کب تک
یہ مانا تم کو تلواروں کی تیزی آزمانی ہے
ہماری گردنوں پر ہوگا اس کا امتحان کب تک
نگارستانِ خون کی سیر گر تم نے نہیں دیکھی
تو ہم دکھلائیں تم کو زخمیائے خون چکاں کب تک
یہ مانا گرمی محفل کے سماں چاہئیں تم کو
دکھائیں ہم تمہیں ہنگامہ آہ و نغماں کب تک
یہ مانا قصہ غم سے تمہارا جی بہلتا ہے
سنائیں تم کو اپنے درد دل کی داستاں کب تک
یہ مانا تم کو شکوہ بے فلک سے خشک سالی کا

ہم اپنے خون سے سچیں تمہاری کھیتیاں کب تک
جو ہجرت کر کے بھی جائیں تو شبلی اب کہاں جائیں

When decay has beset the government –
How long can name or trace of us remain?
How long the smoke rise once the candle in the
assembly-room has been put out?
Once the garment of the kingdom has been torn to shreds
How long can those shreds stay afloat in the air?
Someone ought to ask you, O professors of human civilisation:
For how long, these atrocities? And for how long, these tyrannies?
We guess that you want to test the sharpness of your sword
For how long will our throats be subject to your trial?
Have you not yet seen parks and gardens enough of blood
That we must go on making show of our bloody wounds?
We guess you want more anecdotes to cheer up your gatherings
But how long can we go on with our sorrowful lamenting?
We guess tales of our grief lift your spirits still higher
But how long can we re-tell the story of pain in our hearts?
We guess that you are indignant with heaven for withholding rain
But how long can we keep watering your farms with our blood?

Worse yet, O Shibli: were we to migrate, where could we go?
For how long can peace hold in Najd or Sham or Qayrawan?

His description of the defeat suffered by Muslims in the Balkans is heart-rending. Āftāb endorsed this viewpoint, adding that Shibli's poem on the deplorable demolition of a mosque in Kanpur is equally moving.

کل مجھ کو چند لاشیں بے جاں نظر پڑے
دیکھا قریب جا کے تو زخموں سے چور ہیں
کچھ طفل خردسال ہیں جو چپ ہیں خود مگر
بچپن یہ کہہ رہا ہے کہ ہم بے قصور ہیں

آئے تھے اس لئے کہ بنائیں خدا کا گھر
نیند آگئی ہے منتظر نوح صور ہیں

Yesterday, I saw some lifeless corpses.
When I came nearer, I saw them covered in wounds.
Some of them are young children. Though they are silent
Their being children shows they were not combatants.
We had come here to build a house of God.
We are caught in a long sleep awaiting the Day of Resurrection
When I asked, Who are you? The reply came:
We are the slain of the battle of Kanpur.

Commenting on his contribution to poetry, I contended that he figures among the notable Persian poets of his time. Mawlānā Abū al-Kalām Āzād aptly remarks that the last great Persian poet of India is Shiblī, not Ghālib. This Shiblī couplet bears witness to his affinity with Ḥāfiẓ's style:

دو دل بودن دریں ره سخت تر عیبیست سالک را
تجمل ہستم ز کفر خود کہ دارد یوئے ایماں ہم

(They say:) Having two hearts on this path is
a severe flaw in the traveller.
So my unbelief strikes me with shame,
since it has within it a stain of belief.

Nonetheless, Khālid raised an objection against Shiblī's work *Mawāzanah*, in which he betrays partisanship. He goes out of his way to exalt Anīs and belittle Dabīr. 'Abd al-Ḥayy tried to defend Shiblī, saying that he has been accused of hero worship. However, an objective reader is bound to endorse Shiblī's conclusions, which are marked by their justice and fairness. After the publication of *Mawāzanah*, a number of works appeared in Dabīr's defence in an attempt to refute Shiblī's thesis. However, these works have faded into oblivion while *Mawāzanah* still enjoys both respect and popularity. It has prescribed the criteria for evaluating a poetic

work in Urdu. Whether we follow the principle of 'the survival of the fittest' or 'survival of the most beneficial,' the survival of *Mawāzanah* for such a long time is clear evidence of its success. 'Abd al-Hayy cited one of the couplets by Dabīr, which exemplifies his inept use of Urdu idiom:

محبوب ہوں خدائے ذوی الاحترام کا
نانا ہوں میں حسین علیہ السلام کا

According to Dabīr, in this verse, the Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "I am beloved to God, Exalted is He. And I am the grandfather of Ḥusayn 'alayhi al-salām (peace be upon him)".

What bad taste it is to use 'alayhi al-salām for Ḥusayn on the tongue of the Prophet. This, in turn, vindicates Shiblī's stance that Anīs is far superior to Dabīr as a poet.

Ibrāhīm raised a different point. Ḥālī is a serious, sober writer, yet Shiblī harshly criticised his book *Ḥayāt-i jāved*. In contrast, Ḥālī always spoke highly of Shiblī and recorded it in his poetry as well:

ادب اور مشرقی تاریخ کا ہو دیکھنا مخزن
تو شیبلی سا وحید عصر و یکتائے زمن دیکھیں

"If you want to see the treasury of literature and Oriental history, then look at Shiblī, who is unique and incomparable among his contemporaries."

Wazīr tried to defend Shiblī, saying that he had expressed his opinion on Ḥālī's book in a private letter, not publicly. "Furthermore, his criticism is factually correct. Isn't *Ḥayāt-i jāved* a book of *manāqib* and well-argued panegyric? Not only Shiblī, but other leading scholars of the day such as Nadhīr Aḥmad and Nawāb Ṣadr Yār Jang criticised it, pointing to the very flaws that Shiblī has identified. Why should Shiblī be singled out? To this day Ḥālī's book has been dismissed as a eulogy, though presented as a biography."

Wazīr continued: "Shiblī's success resides also in the influence he exerted on a host of later writers, namely, Mawlānā Āzād, Mawlānā

Zafar ‘Alī Khān, Mawlānā ‘Abd al-Mājid Daryābādī, Mahdī Ifādī, Mawlānā Sayyid Sulaymān Nadwī and Mawlānā ‘Abd al-Salam Nadwī. Even Niyāz Fatehpūrī belongs to the Shibli school.” Khālid laughed at this, saying: “What has happened to you, Wazīr? You never stop talking about Niyāz. It seems as if you have something in common with him.” Wazīr, once again, tried to defend his position, pointing out that Niyāz had been a student of Nadwah and read up to the level of *Mishkāt* here. Khālid said if he had completed his education, he would have become a Nadwī. Wazīr explained that Niyāz had made some outrageous comments in a ḥadīth class and therefore was expelled from Nadwah. (The verse comes to mind, I don’t know who wrote it:

گو واں کے نہیں یہ واں کے نکالے ہوئے تو ہیں
کعبہ سے ان بتوں کو بھی نسبت ہے دور کی

Though we are not from there, at least we are expellees from there.
Are not these stone idols distant kin of the Ka‘bah?

Hashmat drew our attention to the close resemblance between the lives and careers of Niyāz and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn. The latter was a student at al-Azhar. Had he been tackled better there, perhaps he might not have gone so far in his transgression and rebellion. Āftāb is much impressed by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn’s style. He conceded that Ḥusayn’s reputation had been tarnished by his irreverence. Otherwise, he excels others in the strength and impact of his style. I agreed with Āftāb, saying that I derive much joy from reading Ḥusayn’s *‘Alā hāmish al-sīrah*. He is exceptionally articulate and provides a graphic account of the *jāhiliyyah* way of life and Quraysh’s gatherings. Āftāb added that he has finished reading his book on the Caliph ‘Uthmān’s life, which is, no doubt, vitiated by scepticism. Yet his style is almost enchanting. Hashmat recounted his impression about Ḥusayn’s other writings, *al-Ayyām* and *Ḥadīth al-arbi‘ā’*.

Amazed, Khālid asked how Ṭāhā Ḥusayn could have developed such acute observation when he was blind. Mawlānā Wāḍiḥ had

once explained the same point in a lecture. Generally, writers employ a pictorial style of language or sign language. However, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, being blind, relies on plain words alone to express himself. As a result, he is superior to others in his portrayals. Again, owing to his disability, he could not ascertain the responses of his readers. Therefore, he repeats himself, though in a variety of ways so that they do not grow weary. His blindness, in a sense, helped him grow as an effective, successful writer.

Ibrāhīm was not impressed with Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's contribution. Since the latter champions the doctrine of art for art's sake, Ibrāhīm finds it disturbing, as he is committed to ideological, purposive art. He censured us for showering praise on Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, saying that most of his writings are light and merely entertaining. On comparing him with other Egyptian writers, namely Mustafā Luṭfi Manfalūṭī, Amīr Shakīb Arsalān, Rashīd Riḍā and Aḥmad Amīn, one discovers that only Aḥmad Amīn is capable of writing in a grand, academic style. His writings have remarkable simplicity and lucidity. He presents scholarly topics well. His trilogy *Fajr al-islām*, *Āuḥā al-islām* and *Nuḥr al-islām* testify to his flair for writing on academic issues in a simple, uncomplicated style.

We were disturbed by mosquitoes. Khālid complained of this nuisance. Ibrāhīm said that winter is better, when at least flies and mosquitoes do not annoy one. 'Abd al-Ḥayy asked Khālid not to complain of such irritants and recited an apt couplet by Ashraf Māzandrānī, a Persian poet:

در کشور هند کس چرا دارد غم
پیوسته دروست درد و درماں باهم
هر زخم که شب بهم رسد از پیشه
در روز گس برو گزارد مرهم

How can one have trouble in the land of India?
There, biting pain and the cure for it come together:
In the night mosquitoes bite and wound
Then in the day the ointment comes: flies cover the bites.

Khālid Gondawī joined us. He is a sincere friend and charming company. As he entered, he announced dramatically that he had had a lucky escape: he told us that last night he had gone to sleep on the roof, confident that the warden would not be able to find him there if he slept late. However, the warden did look on the roof, but before he could identify him, he ran downstairs wrapped in his blanket. ‘Abd al-Ḥayy recounted another incident when the Muftī was doing the rounds of the Shiblī hostel after *fajr* prayer. He saw a student asleep and woke him up, asking him whether he had done the prayer. He replied he had. On being asked to specify the *sūrah* recited in the first *rak‘ah*, he confidently said that it was *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*. This left the latter speechless. Khālid added that it was perhaps the only instance in which the Muftī was rendered speechless, for we know that he is invincible in argument. Once a student was having a pointless talk with him. On being cornered, he said in exasperation: ‘What, have I been mowing grass at Nadwah?’ The Muftī said that his turn of speech (meaning his use of so rude an expression) confirmed the same.

Wazīr related that once there was a circus in Aminabad. We asked the Muftī’s permission to go there; the Muftī refused to give permission. We argued that since we were going to become ‘*ālim* soon, we should be allowed to visit it in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the evil associated with a circus visit. The Muftī said that one need not taste an impure substance in order to pronounce on its unlawfulness. Khālid lavished praise on the Muftī’s acute mind and his forbearance. Once in his class on *fiqh* he asked Khālid to spell out the beneficiaries in a particular instance of inheritance. He looked at his friend’s notebook and listed them, thinking that the Muftī would not detect his cheating. After he finished his answer, the Muftī asked him to close the notebook and list them again.

While we were recounting incidents involving his acuteness, Muftī Ishtiyāq arrived with a plate full of *ḥalwā* (sweets). He is from Sahahnpur, did his *iftā’* course at Mazāhir al-‘Ulūm, and is now studying Arabic literature at Nadwah. He too lives in the hostel and is a good friend. Whenever he returned to Nadwah from home, he would bring delicious homemade sweets prepared from pure

ghee and share them with us. Just as we started eating these, the electricity power supply cut out. There was noise in the hostels. Such power cuts have their own charm, as students make all sorts of boisterous noise in the ensuing darkness. Even the wardens seem to enjoy this show of warmth and vitality. A little later, the supply was resumed. By then the *halwā* had been eaten completely. Khālid quipped that though in the light everybody was so hesitant over eating, as soon as the electricity went off, they showed their skills.

Hashmatullāh carried the point made earlier by Ibrāhīm further about low academic standards on the Indian subcontinent. After Mullā Maḥmūd Jaunpūrī and Shāh Waliullāh, Ḥakīm ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥasanī was the only scholar to have used a suitable idiom for scholarly work. His eight-volume work *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir* captures the beauty of Arabic idiom. Āftāb admired this book for the wealth of historical information in it. On comparing it with other works on history, one realises its immense value. Mawlānā Munāẓir Aḥsan Gilānī also praised it for its comprehensive range and assiduity. I remembered the Mawlānā’s own high rank as a historian. He was also a distinguished ḥadīth scholar, who drew upon the expertise of such masters as Ḥusayn ibn Muḥsin al-Ansārī, Qārī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Pānīpatī, Nadhīr Ḥusayn Muḥaddith Dihlawī, and Mawlānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī. His highest chain of narration is his narration from the spiritual master and imām of the Naqshbandiyya⁶² order, Mawlānā Faḍl-i Raḥmān Ganj Murādābādī.

Hashmatullāh added that little effort is made to understand the position of Mawlānā Faḍl-i Raḥmān Ganj Murādābādī. He was the mentor of three of the founding members of Nadwah: Mawlānā Muḥammad ‘Alī Mungerī, Mawlānā ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥasanī and Nawab Ṣadr Yār Jung Mawlānā Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān Khān Sherwānī. This was not accidental. Rather, it throws light on the genesis of Nadwah itself. If Shiblī was the intellectual expression of Nadwah, then these three scholars, followers of Mawlānā Faḍl-i Raḥmān Ganj Murādābādī, reveal its sensitive heart. Combining Shiblī’s

62 This Sufi order is related to the fourteenth century (8th century of *hijrah*) Bukharan Sufi Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad Naqshband.

expertise with the blessings of those spiritual masters, Nadwah can accomplish its objectives.

Meanwhile Muftī Ishtiyāq came to our room again, this time with a book in his hand. It was Mawlānā Mawdūdī's *Khilāfat wa Mulūkiyyat*, which Wazīr had lent him. 'Umar Laddākhī took strong exception to this, saying that Wazīr corrupts the minds of the students on the campus. It was improper of him to lend such a book to Muftī Ishtiyāq who, already an 'ālim, is at Nadwah only to study Arabic literature. In his defence, Wazīr said that some time ago in a discussion Muftī Ishtiyāq had criticised Mawdūdī's book, although when pressed on it he admitted that he had not read it for himself; his opposition rested on some second-hand criticism of the book. Wazīr had therefore provided him with the book so that he might form his own opinion. When 'Abd al-Ḥayy sought Muftī Ishtiyāq's opinion, the latter told that he did not find anything wrong in it. Ibrāhīm, however, remarked that Mawlānā Mawdūdī was an intelligent person. His introductory note on the rationale and sources of the book might convince readers of his integrity. However, if he had been really sound in his approach, he would have consulted other scholars before passing judgements on this most difficult and sensitive phase of Islamic history. It would have helped him avoid certain mistakes. Āftāb maintained that consulting other scholars was all the more necessary because Mawdūdī himself had not studied ḥadīth with any recognised scholar, and often appeared painfully ignorant of the idioms of the disciplines.

Wazīr's contention, nonetheless, was that leaving aside these finer details, it should be realised that in our own times Mawlānā Mawdūdī was the first to discuss a pure Islamic state. He has pressed home the point, through several of his writings, that Islam is a complete way of life, and one divinely ordained. For him, Islam is not only for discussion in madrasahs or in books. Rather, it should be implemented in every field of life. We affirm our servitude to God. Has God not ordained commands other than for prayer and fasting, which cannot be enforced without the establishment of an Islamic state?

Ḥashmatullāh asserted that in attacking Western thought the

Mawlānā is akin to Imām Ghazālī. The latter refuted Greek thought while employing its own arguments. "He set a new trend with his *Tahāfut al-falāsifah*. Mawlānā Mawdūdī, Sayyid Quṭb Shahīd, Mālik ibn Nabī and Muḥammad Mubārak have followed the same way in employing Western methodology to expose and condemn Western thought. However, another Islamic response to Greek rationalism was by Mawlānā Rūmī, who refuted it with the help of spirituality. Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār and others contributed in the same vein:

چند خوانی حکمت یونانیوں
حکمت ایمانیوں را ہم بخوان

How long will you read the philosophy of the Greeks?
Read also the wisdom of the believers.

Mawlānā Rūmī and 'Aṭṭār were followed, in our time, by Lisān al-Asr Akbar Ilāhābādī and Iqbal, who employed the same methods and were highly successful. The following couplet explains their stance:

تاریخ جنوں یہ ہے کہ ہر دور خرد میں
اک سلسلہ دار و رسن ہم نے بنایا

The history of ecstasy is that in every time of rationality,
we form a continuous line of nooses and crosses.

Hashmatullāh went on: "Ghazālī's approach was valid in his own time. However, there was a need for a thinker who could tackle the superstructure of Western thought using its own instruments. Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah was fully conversant with the Prophetic sciences, and so his thorough knowledge of Greek thought did not influence him in the least; rather, he was able to deal severe blows to Greek philosophy. There was an inherent weakness in Ghazālī's approach. It is not therefore surprising that *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* came out in refutation of Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifah*. By contrast, no one has so far written a rejoinder to Ibn Taymiyyah's *al-Radd 'alā al-mantiqiyyīn*. Instead, one familiar with modern logic might assume that new logic has been rephrased and modified in the light of Ibn Taymiyyah's objections. Today

the Muslim community needs another Ibn Taymiyyah. At a very late stage Shibli recognised his genius. On appreciating the Shaykh al-Islām's greatness, he wrote in his letters that there is a need to bring out a book on his life and achievements. He ranked him higher than al-Rāzī and al-Ghazālī. Mawlānā Āzād's work, namely *Tarjumān al-qur'ān* and *Tarīkh 'azīmat wa da'wat* are marked by Ibn Taymiyyah's influence. However, his political preoccupations did not permit him to write any further work on Ibn Taymiyyah."

We were so swayed by Ḥashmat's argument that we could not disagree with him. Only Āftāb appeared unmoved. When we pressed him to respond to Ḥashmat's point, he finally said: "I do not endorse Ḥashmat's stance that Ibn Taymiyyah's approach is the ultimate goal. Rather, like Ghazālī's, his approach too represents a passing phase in the history of Islamic thought. Our destination lies far beyond it." 'Abd al-Ḥayy asked what destination can be beyond that, unless we move away from the destination while seeking it? Āftāb affirmed that the refutation of atheistic thought and philosophy is of great help to those of weak faith. It helps them gain firm faith. Ghazālī employed others' weapons to this end. Then, Ibn Taymiyyah used his own weapons to refute and check dangerous trends in society. However, neither of them followed, or in his time was able to follow, the approach typical of God's prophets and messengers. A messenger of God has genuine concern for everyone; his 'argument' is a call addressed to the whole of humanity. Only Shaytan is his adversary, so a messenger does not get bogged down in contradicting or refuting others. He invites people with all sincerity and concern to the straight way. His call does sometimes use argument, but it is presented gently, tactfully and in accordance with varying circumstances. Overall, a prophet's call has a positive orientation. In our times, this approach can be glimpsed in the writings of Ḥasan al-Bannā Shahīd, Mawlānā Ilyās Kāndhalawī and Mawlānā Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī. An urge to reform both individuals and society as a whole and sympathy for the whole of humanity are at the core of their writings.

بدلتا ہے تو رندوں سے کہو اپنا چلن بدلیں
فقط ساقی بدل دینے سے مے خانہ نہ بدلے گا

If you want a change, then ask the drinkers to change their way.
The wine-house cannot be renewed by changing the cupbearer.

Khālid observed that Ḥashmat's argument appeared convincing, and Āftāb's reflections also called for further study and scrutiny. It was now one o'clock in the morning. It was to be my turn to call the *adhān* for *fajr*. We agreed that we should go to bed, as it was already very late. 'Umar recited the following supplication, which is made when people disperse after a gathering:

سبحان الله وبحمده، سبحانك اللهم وبحمدك، وشهد أن لا إله إلا أنت،
ونستغفرك وتوب إليك، سبحان ربك رب العزة عما يصفون، وسلام على
المرسلين، والحمد لله رب العالمين

'Glory and praise be to God. May our Lord be glorified. We testify that there is no god besides God. We seek your forgiveness and turn to You in repentance. Glory be to You, our Lord, full of honour and glory. Peace and blessings be upon the Messengers and praise be to God the Lord of the worlds.' Then each of us, after reciting another supplication, said before going to sleep, اللهم باسمك أموت وأحيا، "O Lord! In Your name I have my death and life", and went to bed.

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds. Peace
and blessings upon His Messenger,
Muḥammad, and upon
his family and his
Companions.



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THE NOTION THAT all modern madrasahs are terrorist factories is a falsehood based on ignorance. This book reveals the daily routine of one well-known madrasah in India and so lifts the veil on that ignorance. It is an account that academics, journalists, pundits and all those concerned with current events and issues should read. It demonstrates that students in a traditional madrasah are given a grounding in religious life without any weakening of intellectual breadth and refinement. Above all, the students learn to tolerate and accept different arguments and points of view and to appreciate different human temperaments.

Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi studied and taught Ḥadīth and Fiqh at the prestigious Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’ (India). He was also educated at the University of Lucknow and is the author and translator of over 25 books, written in Arabic, on Islamic sciences and the Arabic language. After teaching Islamic Sciences at Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’ for six years, he joined the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in 1991 as a Research Fellow. The author is currently revising his recently completed 40-volume biographical dictionary of the *Muḥaddithāt*, the women scholars of Hadith. The *Muqaddimah* or Introduction to this dictionary is also being published separately in English and is scheduled to appear in 2007.

Professor James Piscatori is Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford, and Senior Tutor of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. He is the author, among other publications, of *Islam in a World of Nation-States*, and co-editor of *Muslim Travelers: Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination*. He formerly taught at the University of Wales and Johns Hopkins University, and is an editor of several journals in Islamic studies.

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